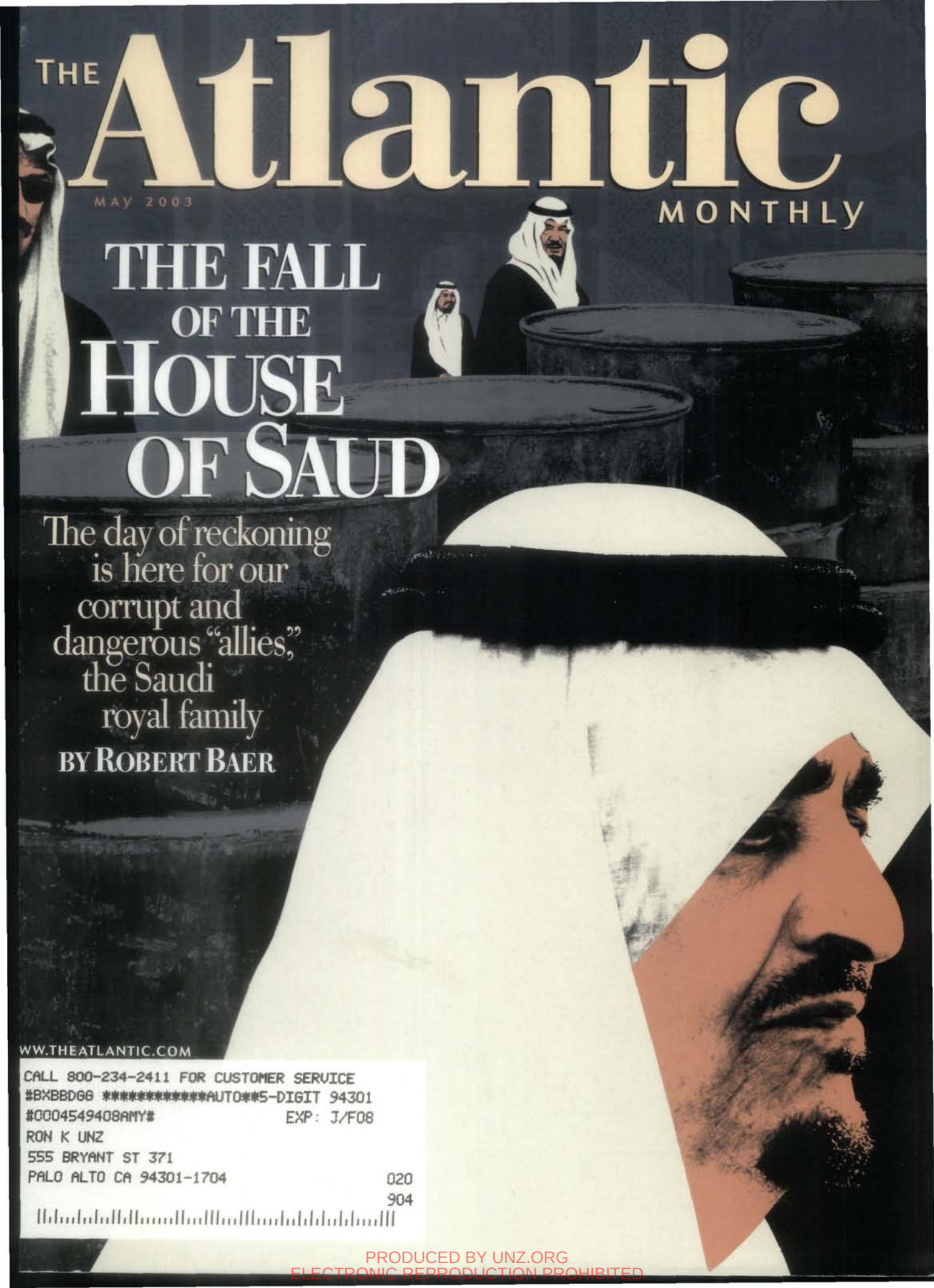
THE Atlantic MONTHLY
MAY 2003

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF SAUD

The day of reckoning is here for our corrupt and dangerous "allies," the Saudi royal family

BY ROBERT BAER



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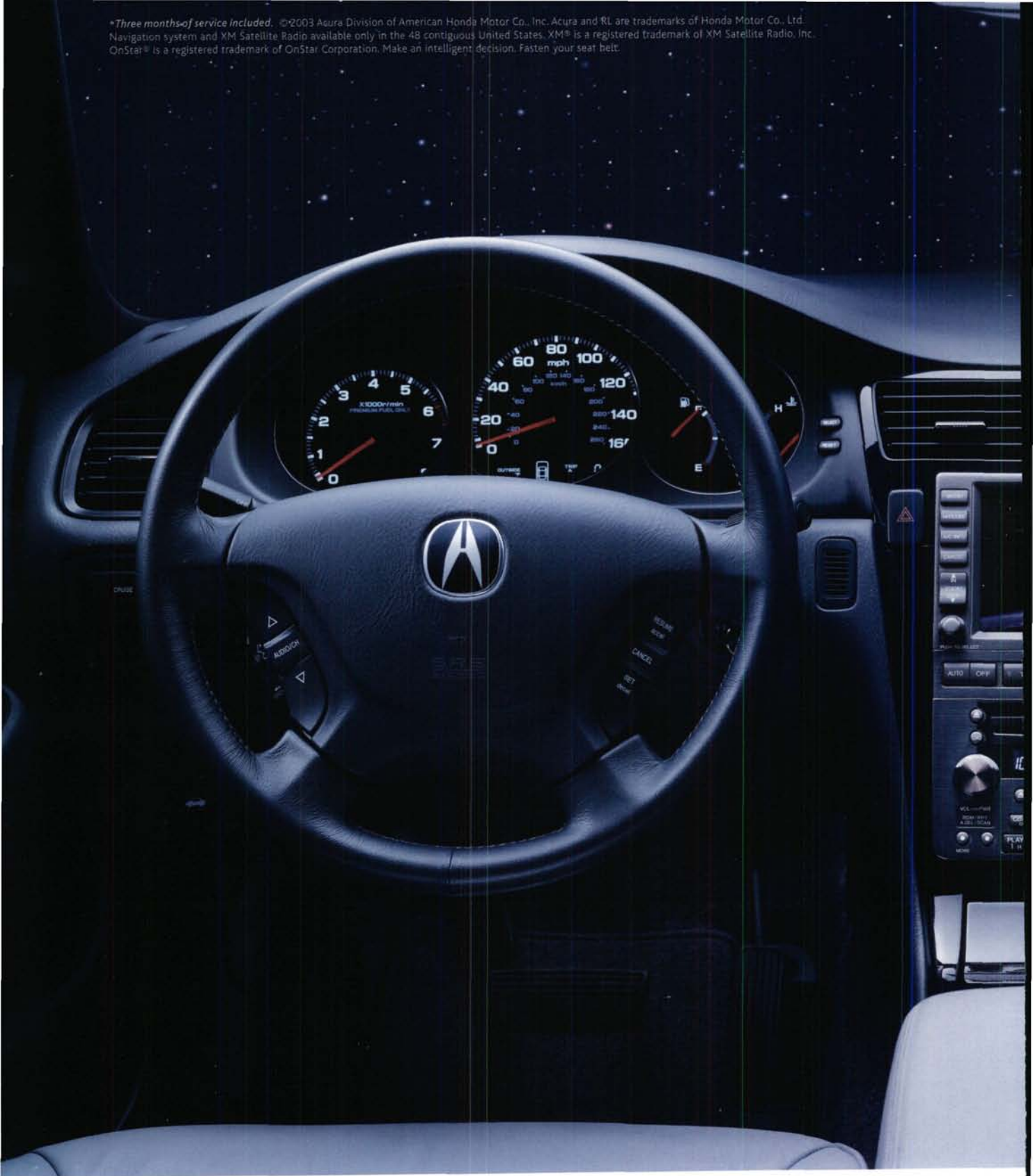

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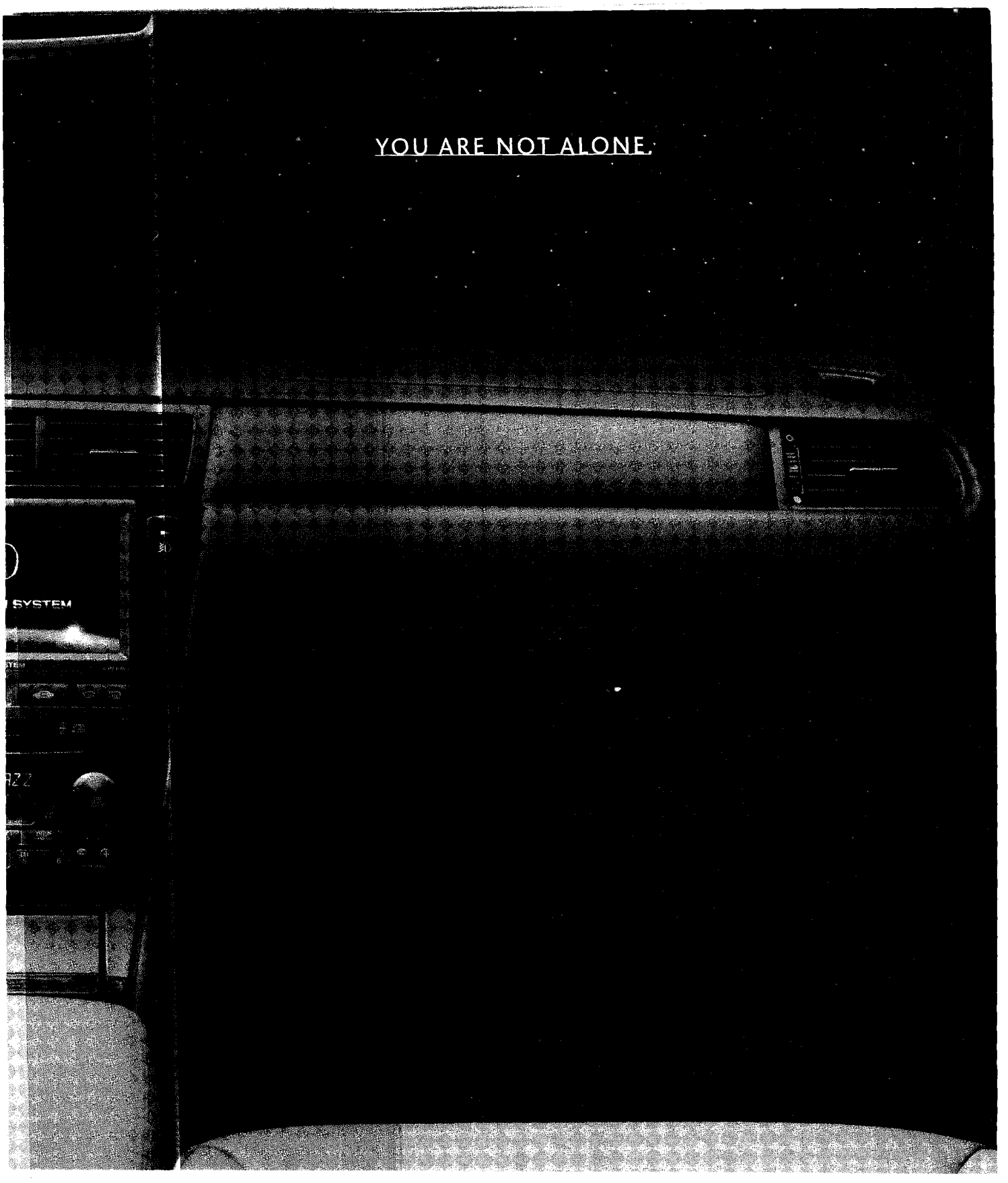

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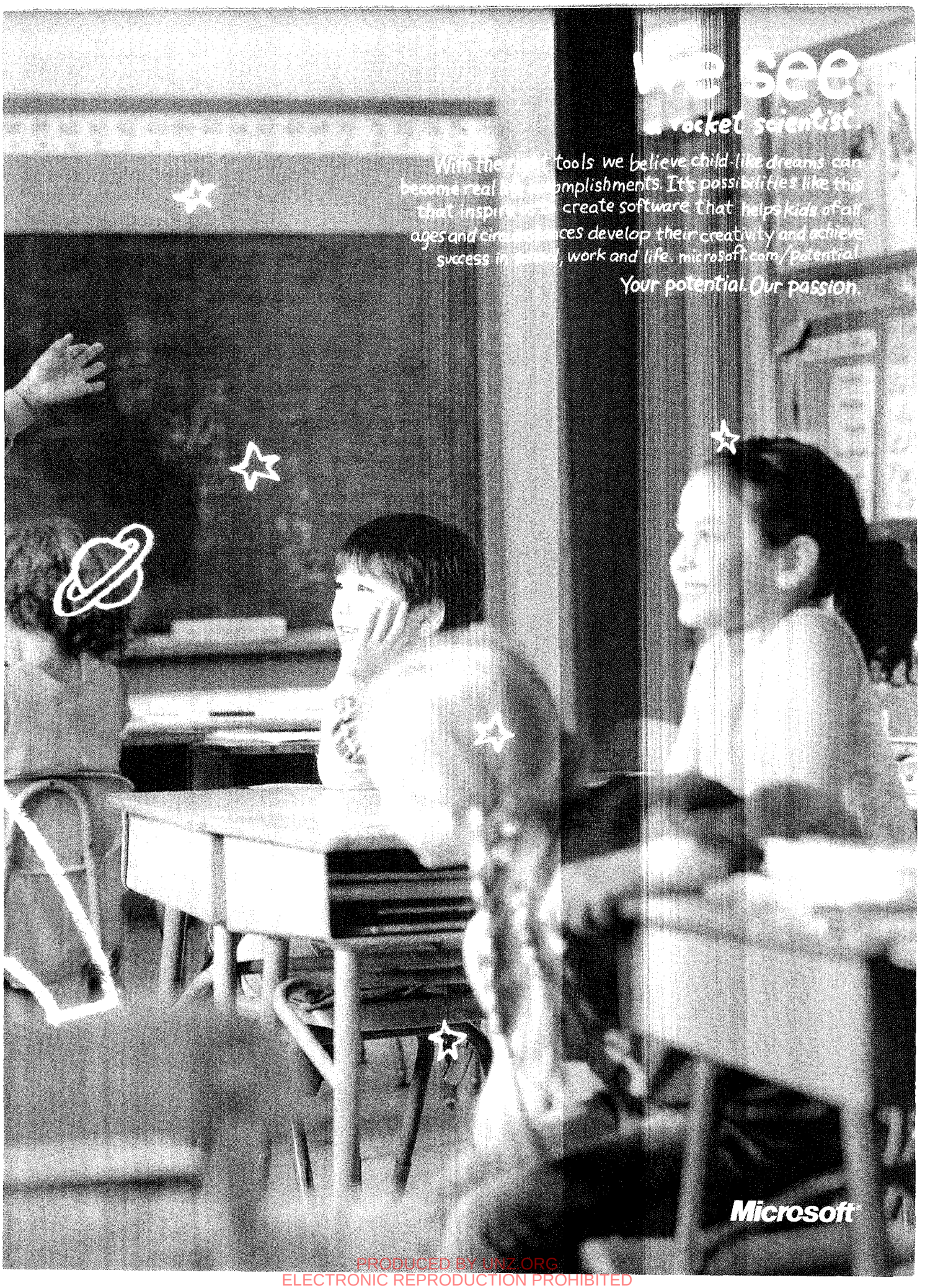

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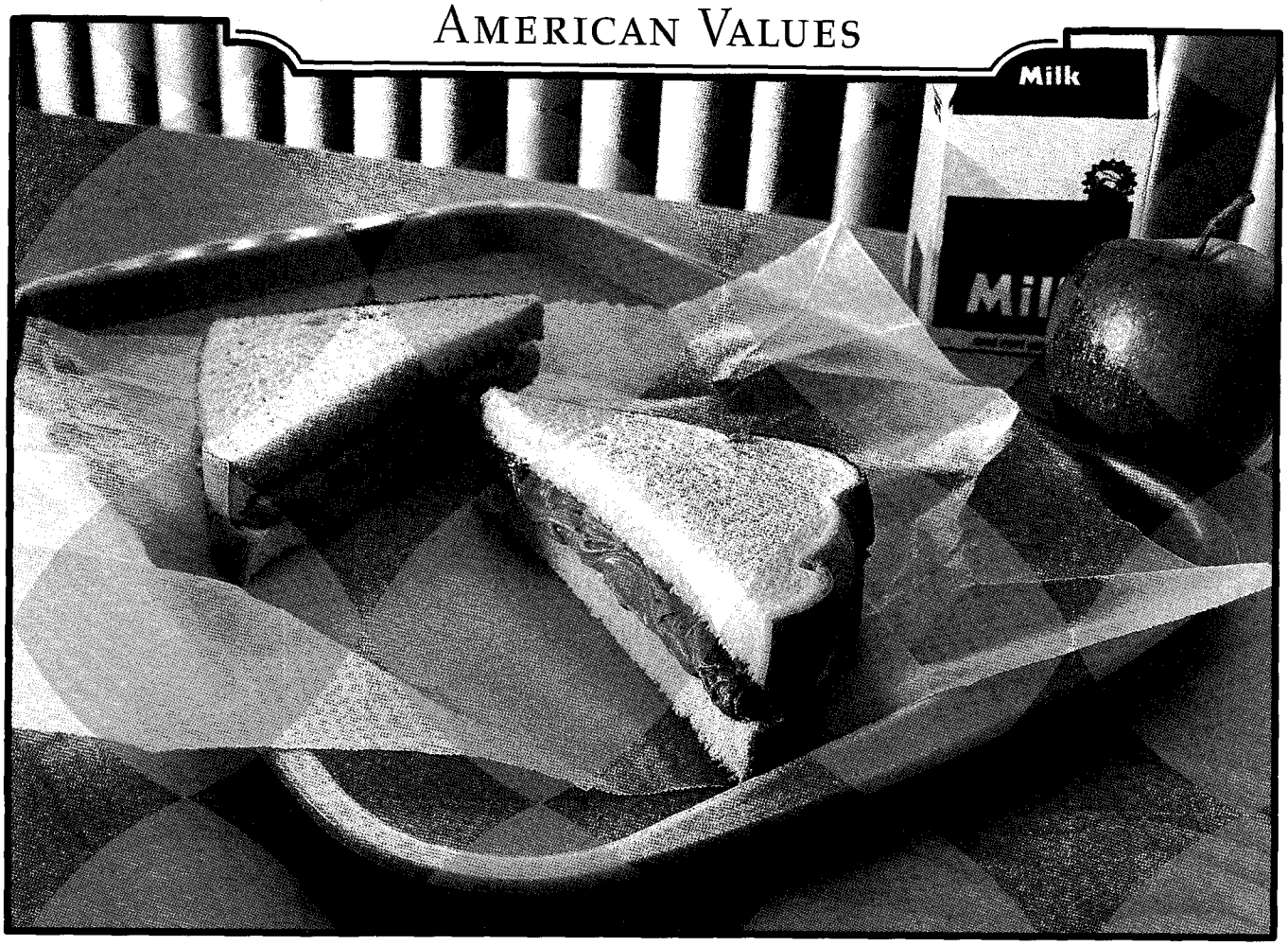

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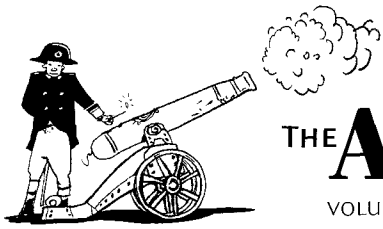

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Garcia talks about her new novel, *Monkey Hunting*, reviewed by Margot Livesey in this issue.

From the Archives: Evelyn Waugh in *The Atlantic Monthly*

A profile of Waugh from the pages of *The Atlantic*, along with reviews of his work by L. E. Sissman, Penelope Lively, and others, and a reflection by Geoffrey Wheatcroft on Waugh's complex relationship with his son Auberon.

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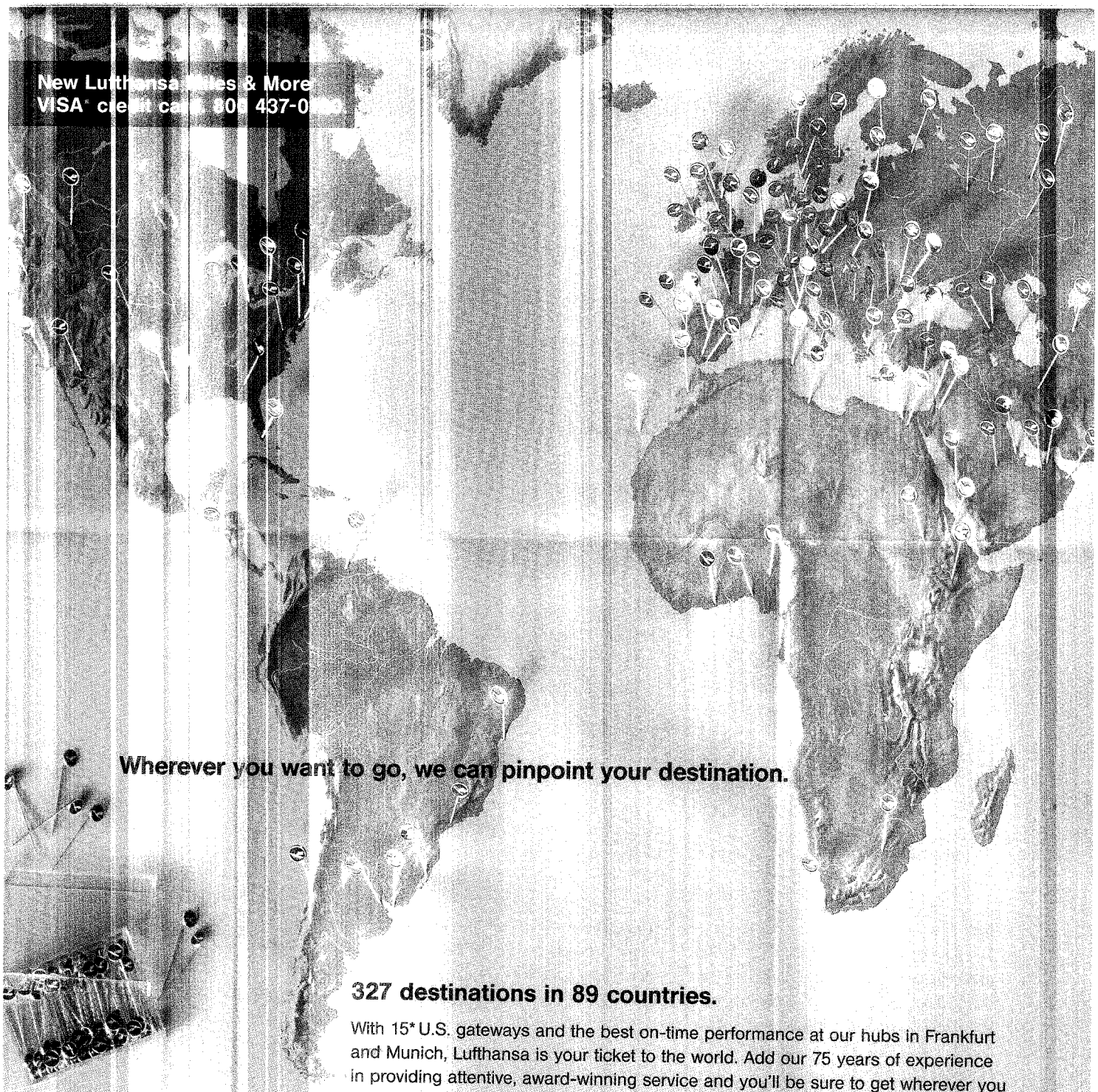

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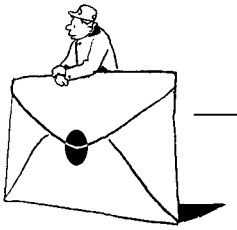

Letters to the Editor

"The Real State of the Union," *a special feature in the January/February issue of* The Atlantic, *generated more than 150 letters from readers. The bulk of this month's Letters to the Editor is devoted to a sampling of responses to that feature.*

"Suspicious Minds"

It is ironic that the centerpiece of Jedediah Purdy's article consists of a pair of charts separately depicting the decline over time of trust in institutions and trust in individuals. But these charts are untrustworthy, because they use different scales. Plot the "Interpersonal Trust" data on the same chart with "Trust in Institutions" and you will find that "Interpersonal Trust" has held up much better than trust in "Major Companies" or in "The Executive Branch." Shame on Purdy. To atone, he might provide a sequel on the topic of "Trust in the Media."

David Smith
Plano, Texas

Jedediah Purdy replies:

I'm not sure what has upset David Smith about the graphs that accompanied my essay. He doesn't suggest that the contrasting graphs somehow aid my argument, so I am left with the impression that he thinks I deceive people just for fun.

In any case, the graphs differ because they represent different kinds of data. The graph of trust in institutions measures how many people expressed "a great deal of confidence" in various institutions—one of four possible answers, from highest to lowest level of confidence. As I point out in my essay, these have not "held up" but, rather, have jumped around a great deal, often tracking major public events. The interpersonal-trust graph is based on a two-option, either-or measure, which shows what percentage of people believe that others are or are not trustworthy. The share who find others truthworthy has fallen for decades. These two graphs measure different but related phenomena in different ways, not because I designed the graphs that way but because the only good data on these trends were gathered with differently structured poll questions. Putting them on one chart would have invited the same kind of confusion that David Smith has gone out of his way to achieve.

"The Real State of the Budget"

The "five largest federal tax expenditures" presented in Maya MacGuineas's sidebar titled "The Real State of the Budget" are quite a stretch, to say the least. Presenting these so-called "expenditures" (exclusions for pension and health-care contributions, deductions for home-mortgage interest and various taxes, and reduced rates for capital gains) as such presupposes that all this potential income was naturally "owed" in the first place. If so, why stop here? Why not add to the list deductions for the cost of materials, or the cost of labor? And what about the reduction in tax revenue that derives from not taxing everyone at the highest rate? Why not just start with the proposition that all revenues generated by business are owed to the government, and what the government chooses to give back to businesses or to citizens becomes income? The line of reasoning in this sidebar is comparable to my adding up all the discounts I took advantage of in buying Christmas gifts and assuming that I made that amount of money. A tax opportunity forgone is not an expenditure; it is simply food for political argument.

Charles Treichel
Madison, Wis.

The idea of an $800 billion "hidden budget" (defined as "tax expenditures—subsidies that run through the tax code and which the government pays for, in effect, through forgone tax revenues") is at the core of Maya MacGuineas's sidebar. She presents a brief analysis of it and concludes that most of that money benefits upper-middle-class Americans.

The analysis on which it rests, however, considers only "the five largest federal tax expenditures," which make up only $334 billion (42 percent) of the total hidden budget. How the expenditure of the remaining $466 billion (58 percent) would affect this conclusion is apparently ignored.

C. Bernard Barfoot
Alexandria, Va.

If deductions, exclusions, reduced tax rates, and other "subsidies" in the tax code are "expenditures," then what portion of the tax code represents "revenues"? Maya MacGuineas's analysis implies that there is some "base" form of taxation that is revenue, and that downward deviations from this base represent the "hidden budget." But if this analysis is to be honest and comprehensive, then all deviations from the base should be included as expenditures. So what is the base? The only unbiased base one could concoct would be a single-rate tax on all income. The single rate would have to be the highest tax rate, because we are looking for any modification to the base that results in less revenue generation (in the author's terms, "subsidies" or "expenditures"). The author gives the reduced tax rate for capital gains as an example of an expenditure. So it seems fair to count any reduction from the base (that is, highest) rate as an expenditure.

In 1999 the highest average effective tax rate was about 26.5 percent. So by a consistent definition of "expenditure," those who paid less than this highest

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rate were "subsidized," and the amount of the subsidy is the difference between what they actually paid and what they would have paid if they had been taxed at 26.5 percent. This amount turns out to be about $600 billion, of which about $430 billion would have come from taxpayers earning less than $75,000. This despite the fact that by virtue of using adjusted gross income and effective tax rates, we have let all these folks keep their other "subsidies"!

Samuel J. Radcliffe
Milwaukee, Wis.

"The Real State of the Budget" proposes a disaster for the middle class. The chart shows that taxing pension contributions and earnings would raise an additional $88 billion; taxing employer contributions for health care would raise $69 billion; eliminating the deduction for home-mortgage interest would raise $67 billion; taxing capital gains at a non-reduced rate would raise $65 billion; and eliminating deductions for state and local income and personal-property taxes would raise $45 billion. These five tax increases would raise a total of $334 billion. This thinking follows the usual liberal line that such additional taxes would affect only "the rich"—as if the middle class had no pensions, no health care, no home mortgages, no capital gains, and no IRAs or any other investments, and paid no state or local taxes.

The reality, of course, is quite different. The IRS Statistics of Income Report for 1999 (the most recent available) shows that families earning $50,000 to $75,000 are the largest class of federal income-tax payers; in 1999 they paid more than $700 billion in federal income taxes. Families with incomes of more than $1 million ("the rich") paid less than $600 billion. It is quite evident that this "real budget" proposes to squeeze the largest portion of the $334 billion tax increase out of the middle class.

Frank Voorhees
Holden, Mo.

The premise of Maya MacGuineas's presentation is that tax dollars not collected (through exclusions and deductions) are really "expenditures." Under a subheading laughably titled "Budget Facts," we are told that the money per person spent on seniors exceeds that spent on children by a ratio of 8:1. But everyone knows that education is largely funded by local communities and the states. MacGuineas undoubtedly included Social Security payouts in the senior dollar amount on which she based the ratio. But I'm only guessing, since no sources or assumptions are given as a basis for her figures.

Thank God that so little of our education, retirement, and health care is funded by the federal government. Tax deductions and exclusions put more money in the hands of individuals, so they can make decisions based on self-interest. Do we really want a sluggish behemoth (the feds) administering these crucial facets of our lives?

Barbara McAulay
Lakewood, N.J.

Maya MacGuineas makes the argument that features of the income-tax code such as the deduction for home-mortgage interest payments amount to "expenditures" paid mostly to households making more than $100,000 a year. She even has pie charts to show how the government is paying big chunks of money to the rich. The hidden message is that the government is subsidizing rich people at the expense of the poor. This is utter nonsense: every supposed "expenditure" by the government to the rich taxpayer is made with his own money, not—as with welfare payments—with someone else's. Under her line of reasoning, if I were to go into a clothing shop and buy a suit at a time when the store was having a sale of 20 percent off, I should declare the 20 percent on my next tax return as "income" paid to me by the store.

The truth is that spending by the federal government has for many years been a huge transfer of wealth from people who earn it to people who do not, enforced by the ballot box (in the case of payments to the elderly) and by the threat of social unrest (in the case of payments to the poor).

Stewart B. Herman
New York, N.Y.

Maya MacGuineas replies:

Both Charles Treichel and Samuel J. Radcliffe take issue with the baseline I use for estimating federal tax expenditures—arguing, it seems, that it would be more appropriate to use an arbitrarily constructed baseline rather than the standard one employed by the Joint Tax Committee. I can only imagine the howls of protest had I taken that route. Tax expenditures must, by law, be defined relative to a normal income-tax structure. Normal income-tax structure has been widely interpreted to include existing tax rates (which are graduated, not flat), the personal exemption, the standard deduction, and the exemption of costs needed to generate income. (Which is why, in answer to Mr. Treichel's question, the deductions for the costs of labor and materials are not included as tax expenditures.) Some believe that the tax-expenditure baseline should reflect changes in the U.S. tax system, which has become more of a hybrid income and consumption tax than a straightforward income tax. Indeed, the Treasury Department may alter its estimates to reflect this shift. It is, however, quite unlikely that Treasury will arrive at anything resembling what either Mr. Treichel or Mr. Radcliffe might propose.

A number of letter writers object to the concept of tax expenditures more broadly. Federal tax expenditures are defined by the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 as "revenue losses attributable to provisions of the Federal tax laws which allow a special exclusion, exemption, or deduction from gross income or which provide a special credit, a preferential rate of tax, or a deferral of tax liability." By making this area of the budget more transparent, I am starting with the premise not, as Mr. Treichel suggests, that all potential income is "owed" to the government but, rather, that government must pay for what it spends, through either tax revenues or borrowing. When policies are created that allow some people to pay less than they otherwise would, the money has to be made up by someone else. The effect is no different when the government creates a new spending program that must be paid for. This point is made by the Joint Tax Committee in its annual listing of tax expenditures, where it explains, "Special income tax provisions are referred to as tax expenditures because they may be considered to be analogous to direct outlay programs, and the two can be

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considered as alternative means of accomplishing similar budget policy objectives." Reinforcing this point, the President's budget states, "Spending programs require resources to be raised via taxes, user charges, or government borrowing, which can impose further costs by diverting resources from their most efficient uses, but tax expenditures can have similar effects by requiring government to make up for lost revenue." Simply put, when the government provides a service for one group of people, whether by writing checks for Social Security or by providing tax breaks, someone else has to make up the difference.

I happen to agree with C. Bernard Barfoot's point that by analyzing only the five largest tax expenditures, I was unable to paint a complete picture. That the data are not available to do so illustrates one of the common criticisms of using the tax code to achieve public-policy objectives: it is extremely difficult to measure and evaluate the effects of tax-expenditure policies.

In response to Barbara McAulay's comments, of course the portion of Social Security that is paid to senior citizens was included in the analysis of how much of the federal budget is devoted to seniors relative to children. Given that Social Security is the single largest government program, it would have been absurd to exclude it. Ms. McAulay claims to be relieved that so little of our education, retirement, and health care is funded by the federal government, so she might want to glance at the budget. Presumably, she would be dismayed to learn that a tremendous share of retirement and health-care costs are financed and administered by the federal government—the "sluggish behemoth," as she calls it.

"The New Continental Divide"

I was intrigued by Michael Lind's article, in which he describes U.S. coastal areas that have become as crowded as Europe and Asia. The United States is now the third most populous country in the world, after China and India, and growing by three million people annually. As Lind points out, immigrants account for 70 percent of that growth (at least), and they settle primarily in already overcrowded coastal areas, driving down wages and worsening working conditions.

In order to alleviate crowded metro areas, Lind suggests a federal program that would help "poor and working-class Americans" move from both coasts to the Great Plains by establishing manufacturing and a high-tech infrastructure there. This would work, he maintains, only if future migrants and immigrants did not settle in coastal areas. Otherwise, just in order to keep pace with immigration, about two million people annually would have to be moved inland to less crowded states.

The "real" solution is the most obvious and realistic one, completely overlooked in this essay. Congress should reduce our unsustainable immigration numbers from 1.8 million a year to pre-1965 numbers of under 300,000. Like the Homestead Act, this would not cost the government a dime.

Caroline MacWherter
Wayzata, Minn.

Michael Lind's essay is a masterpiece of heartland-bashing. He advocates ending farm and ranch subsidies and eliminating irrigation subsidies in the West. He believes that water should be diverted from agriculture to industry. He suggests moving poor immigrants from their present urban, coastal locations, which they prefer to the heartland, and building factories to attract them. He feels that a sixty-acre alfalfa field is a poor use of land and water, when the same land and water could support a "semiconductor factory with 2,000 workers." He advocates a "post-agrarian heartland" in which "monotonous expanses of wheat and corn" are replaced by factories or wilderness. He writes that "the first wave of heartland settlement was ... a failure," although "the United States grows far more food today than it did in 1954—on about three quarters the acreage." Some failure! Apparently, he has not given a thought to the high food prices and food scarcity that his liberal post-agrarian utopia would produce. His real goal is to move poor (and often illegal) immigrants to the heartland, replacing agriculture with factories for the immigrants and wilderness for the elite.

Frank Voorhees
Holden, Mo.

Michael Lind's suggestion ignores the basic reason that people leave the Great Plains and move to coastal areas. Rural communities lack the education and economic opportunities desired by many Americans. If these states cannot sustain and retain their own small populations, they certainly cannot offer hope for people seeking a better-than-coastal life.

To fulfill Lind's dream of resettling the heartland we must begin with local and state policies to enhance economic development, not federal policies of displacement that shift coastal housing problems to the economically depressed center. Lind is misguided in reducing the heartland's problem to a need for more people. First we must counter the misconception that Lind and many other coastal natives have that "Kansas will never be as scenic as San Francisco."

Mary K. Feeney
Casper, Wyo.

Michael Lind is behind the times in recommending that the government undertake an initiative to provide "high-speed broadband access" widely, especially in the American heartland. Under the Clinton Administration and at the urging of Al Gore, the Federal Communications Commission significantly raised the small fee previously charged to help poor people get phone service. Called the universal connectivity charge, this tax on all telephone service now rakes in more than $5 billion a year. The amount one pays varies by provider; AT&T is currently forced by the FCC to add 11 percent to my long-distance bill. The money is collected by the FCC and spent outside the purview of Congress by the "nonprofit" Service Administration Corporation, with a board composed primarily of telephone-company executives. The money spent in every state is used mainly for the type of communications infrastructure that Lind wants. Considering the vast overcapacity already in the telecommunications network, if $5 billion a year isn't enough, how much does Lind want to spend?

Morton Lurie
Raleigh, N.C.

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Michael Lind replies:

Caroline MacWherter is right that the decentralization of population in the United States cannot produce higher wages and living standards unless the overall U.S. population is stabilized. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the present high rate of immigration will help bring the U.S. population to 400 or 500 million by 2050 and perhaps more than a billion by the twenty-second century. In 1995 the bipartisan U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, chaired by the late Barbara Jordan, recommended reducing unskilled immigration and capping family-sponsored immigration (the largest category) at 400,000 a year. Unfortunately, a coalition of business lobbies interested in low-wage labor and ethnic lobbies seeking to increase the numbers of particular ethnic groups, without regard for the consequences for wages and the environment, continues to block meaningful immigration reform in Congress.

Mary Feeney's description of me as a "coastal native" is amusingly erroneous. I am a fifth-generation native of west-central Texas, the southernmost portion of the Great Plains, and I own a small cattle ranch not far from Fredericksburg, Texas. The fact that I would lose my agricultural tax exemption if the policies I propose were adopted might be taken as evidence of my sincerity, inasmuch as in the common law an "admission against interest" is taken to be of high probative value.

I agree with Morton Lurie that a disguised excise tax on telephone users is an unfair way to pay for telephone and Internet service for rural and poor Americans. The money should come out of general revenues, so that a lighter tax burden falls on a larger taxpaying population. As I argued in my essay, most of the money should be provided by the federal government, which is better able than many financially struggling state and local governments to pay for what is really a national infrastructure.

"The Overtreated American"

Shannon Brownlee brings to the table an important issue that has received scant attention. As a nurse and an ethicist who makes rounds weekly in intensive-care units, I am constantly struck by the enormous sums of money spent on patients whose best possible outcome will be nursing-home placement on life support. Families have increasingly unrealistic expectations, and physicians and hospitals feel constrained by the threat of liability to accommodate the "values and wishes" of patients and families to "do everything." I would argue that the majority of patients would look at this group and say "no thanks." Yet families simply cannot let go. Do we have the courage as a society to limit these expensive interventions (while excluding the 45 million with no access)? Insurers can impose limits, but what hospital will stop care in the face of a family that refuses to agree? And so the price for the hospital is unreimbursed care, another major crack in the system that, again, receives little attention. The bottom line is that we as a society feel entitled to the best of all medical care, without restraint, yesterday, but we are not willing to pay the ever increasing price tag.

Sheila Otto
Slingerlands, N.Y.

Shannon Brownlee's valuable suggestions would be even more worthwhile if this country were not approaching its health-care problem backwards. We have continually assumed that our health care costs "too much" and must be constrained in order to keep the bills down. However, if we first determined what percentage of gross domestic product should be allocated to each of our basic needs, including health care, and then fit the services to that allocation, we would achieve a more satisfactory result. For example, if we collectively decided that we could dedicate as much as a fifth of GDP to provide our best medical technology to all citizens (health care currently absorbs 14 percent of GDP), we would be able to align other priorities and select appropriate methods, including those that Brownlee advocates.

Without the foundation of such comprehensive thinking, we will forever be struggling with cost containment and underusing our technical capabilities. We will also have trouble making tactical decisions—such as whether to continue spending six percent and 13 percent of our health-care dollars in the first and last years, respectively, of individual life.

Charles Stewart Goodwin
Cotuit, Mass.

Shannon Brownlee replies:

One way to help Americans understand the limits of medicine would be for more hospitals to institute "palliative care" practices. Palliative-care specialists are devoted not to trying to extend patients' lives but, rather, to improving the quality of them, particularly for those in pain or with terminal conditions. That involves working closely with families, and helping them to grasp the true consequences of medical decisions. Putting an ailing eighty-five-year-old woman with pneumonia in the hospital increases the chances that she will die in the intensive-care unit. A better choice might be to care for her at home, with nursing help to keep her comfortable, and to treat her illness.

Charles Stewart Goodwin's suggestion, that we decide what percentage of GDP we want to spend on health care and then keep treatment costs within that budget, sounds a lot like a single-payer system. And without first changing the culture of medicine and the constraints on quality, a single-payer system could have the perverse effect of boosting overtreatment rather than reducing it—lowering the quality of care even more. Canada and Europe pay less per capita for health care than we do, but they, too, are plagued by high rates of overtreatment. In this country Medicare is in effect a single-payer system for the aged, and it has been unable to rein in excess care.

"The $6,000 Solution"

Ray Boshara's "$6,000 solution" is nothing but microwaved propaganda from the leftist cafeteria. No one has ever shown that inequality of wealth creates social problems; Marx said it, and journalists believe it. If Boshara did a little research, he would find these things to be true:

A. Inequality increases during expansions and shrinks during recessions.

B. Inequality has increased in the United States at a constant rate since World War II; Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson had no effect on it at all.

C. There are three reasons for inequality growth:

1. Immigration.

2. Growth in the number of households headed by single mothers.

3. An increase in the proportion of young people in a country. Older people

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earn more than younger ones, so when countries have a high percentage of young people, the wealth is distributed less equally.

Roger McKinney
Tulsa, Okla.

I suspect that Ray Boshara has never lived in the poverty about which he theorizes. If he had, he would know that however well-meaning his Stakeholder Account idea, it is unworkable.

Being poor doesn't mean just having low or no income. It also often means a lack of stable housing, dependable transportation, weather-appropriate clothing, and, in too many cases, nutritious food. And did I mention health and dental care? Being poor means constantly weighing one priority against another, managing one crisis after another, allocating scarce resources to patch immediate problems. Knowing what's for dinner sometimes constitutes long-range planning. I suggest that this lack of stability (a stability the middle class takes for granted)—never having sufficient resources to plan or prepare for what might come next—is responsible for the dysfunctional, crazy-making chaos that so often accompanies poverty.

If access to the Stakeholder Account were restricted by time or age requirements, what kind of frustration, anger, and bitterness would that engender? Does Boshara really believe that a family in such dire circumstances would be able—or willing—to let $6,000 (per child) simply sit in a portfolio while the family faced eviction, or starvation, or just general deprivation?

Barbara Maddox
New York, N.Y.

Good ideas should not spring from a faulty historical memory, as when Ray Boshara discusses the Homestead Act of 1862. Boshara is correct about the basic terms of the act, but he fails to mention that this legislation was quickly used by wealthy eastern speculators to enrich themselves. Of the 600 million acres available, nearly 180 million were given by the government to railroad corporations, which sold the land at inflated prices to farmers desperate to be located near the means of shipping their products. Likewise, speculators sent hired men to sign for a homestead and turn it over for a quick profit. Indeed, one historian calculates that nearly half the homesteads issued in the fifty years after 1862 were fraudulent. Those farmers who did manage to acquire a homestead still needed to pay for the machinery, seeds, animals, and hands necessary to make a farm succeed. Although nothing is wrong with Boshara's proposal for remedying the serious gap between the haves and the have-nots, he might want to consider the tendency of the wealthy to grow rich on the backs of the poor.

Peter Bratt
Columbus, Ohio

Ray Boshara replies:

The point of my article was not to argue that wealth inequality causes social problems (although some recent data, summarized in the Winter 2002 issue of Daedalus, *show that it does), or to argue that inequality per se is the problem, but, rather, to show that wealth inequality tells us that too few people have enough resources to move their lives forward—and, consequently, that we need to think about wealth-based, not just income-based, solutions to inequality. As to the charge that my idea is from the "leftist cafeteria," if Roger McKinney did a little research, he'd find that both Democrats* and *Republicans have introduced or supported legislation to create and fund asset accounts for every child in America.*

Barbara Maddox makes my point perhaps better than I did: Because government never enabled the poor to have assets, and actually told the poor that they couldn't have assets, the poor have no economic stability whatsoever, must live crisis to crisis, and have little hope of a better future. I couldn't agree more that poverty means more than just a low income; it means having no assets—and there are at least twice as many asset-poor as income-poor households in the United States today. Granted, money locked up in an American Stakeholder Account would do nothing to relieve the day-to-day pressures of poverty, but it would go a long way toward ensuring that the next generation, and subsequent generations, would not live in poverty. Also, the first part of my proposal—to "democratize" the tax-code subsidies for savings and assets—would generate both new savings and income-producing assets that could be tapped by the poor in a time of necessity. Finally, I would note that in voluntary asset-building demonstration projects around the country it is the poorest of the poor who are saving the greatest proportion of their income. And by the way, I did grow up in poverty.

Lack of space, rather than a faulty historical memory, is responsible for my brief and necessarily incomplete discussion of the Homestead Act. The Homestead Act and, for that matter, the GI Bill were far from perfect. Both policies, for example, largely failed to reach African-Americans and other minority members. And that failure surely contributed to the enormous differences in wealth between whites and nonwhites today. However, the core idea of the Homestead Act—widespread asset ownership—remains sound, and is worth revisiting in the twenty-first century, whether through American Stakeholder Accounts or other means.

"Mongrel America"

In rightly questioning whether racial categories (in this case, those used by the U.S. Census Bureau) are valid or relevant, Gregory Rodriguez writes, "If your mother is Asian and your father is African-American, what, racially speaking, are you? (And if your spouse is half Mexican and half Russian Jewish, what are your children?)"

"Jewish" is *not* a race, it is a religion—period. "Race" is biologically transmitted, because it is a genetic phenomenon; the religious traditions of Judaism, like those of all religions, are socially and culturally transmitted and have no foundation in our genome. Judaism is passed from generation to generation through the social and cultural teaching of its traditions, practices, and beliefs.

David M. Taub
Beaufort, S.C.

I read Gregory Rodriguez's essay with relish and a bit of surprise. Rodriguez insists that Mexicans, "a product of intermingling—both cultural and genetic" between Spaniards and the native peoples of the Americas, "have a history of tolerating and even reveling in such ambiguity." To a certain extent this is true. No one doubts that the vast majority of Mexican citizens today are "mestizos,"

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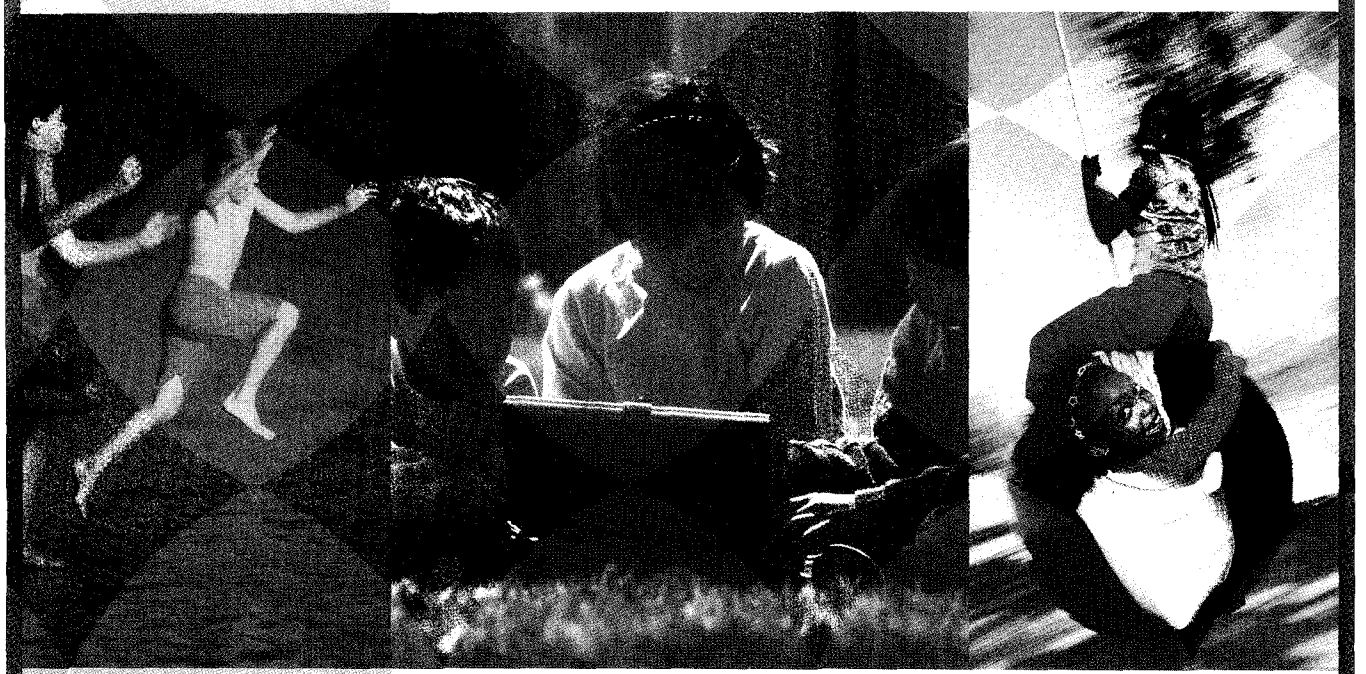

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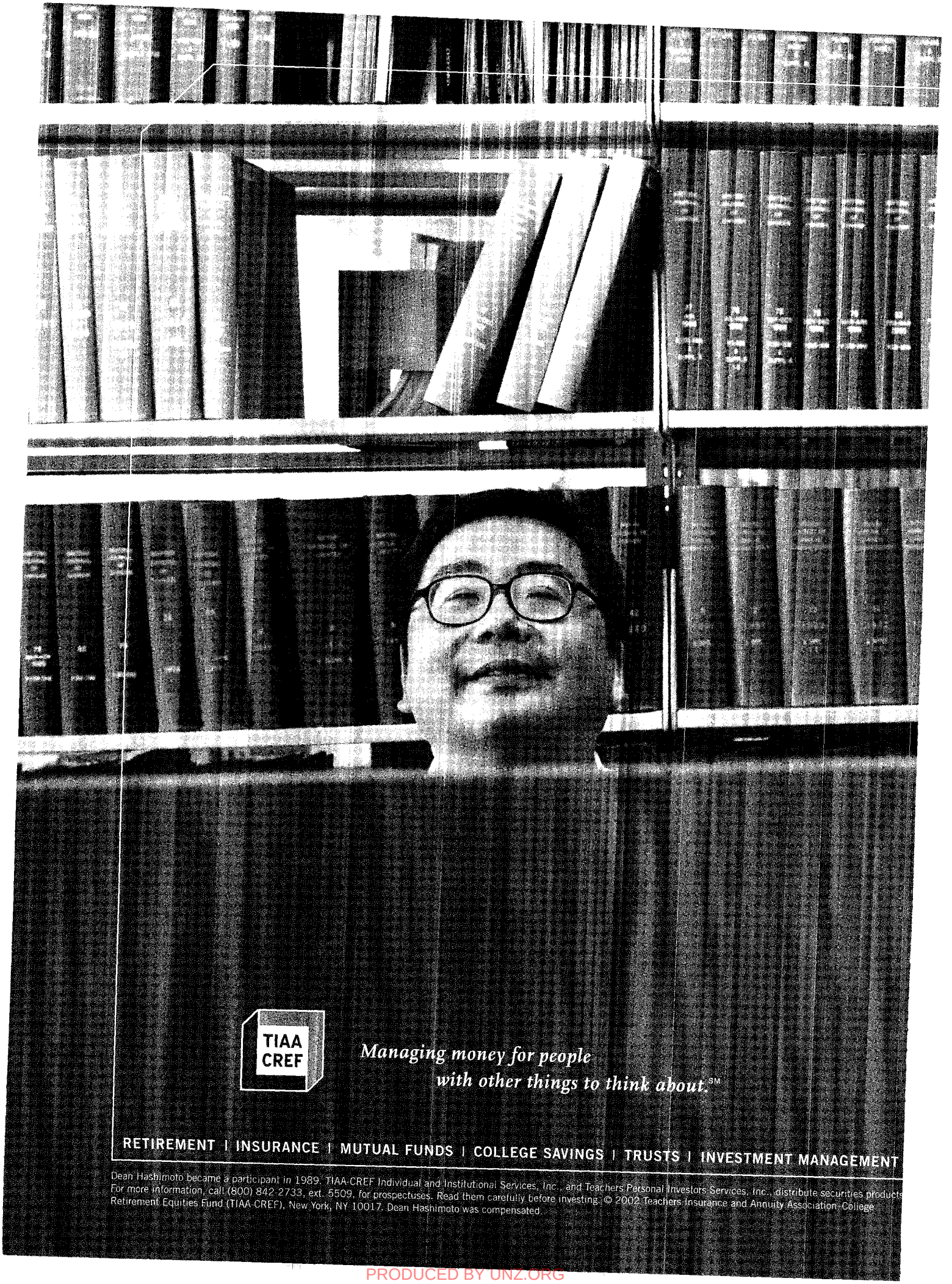

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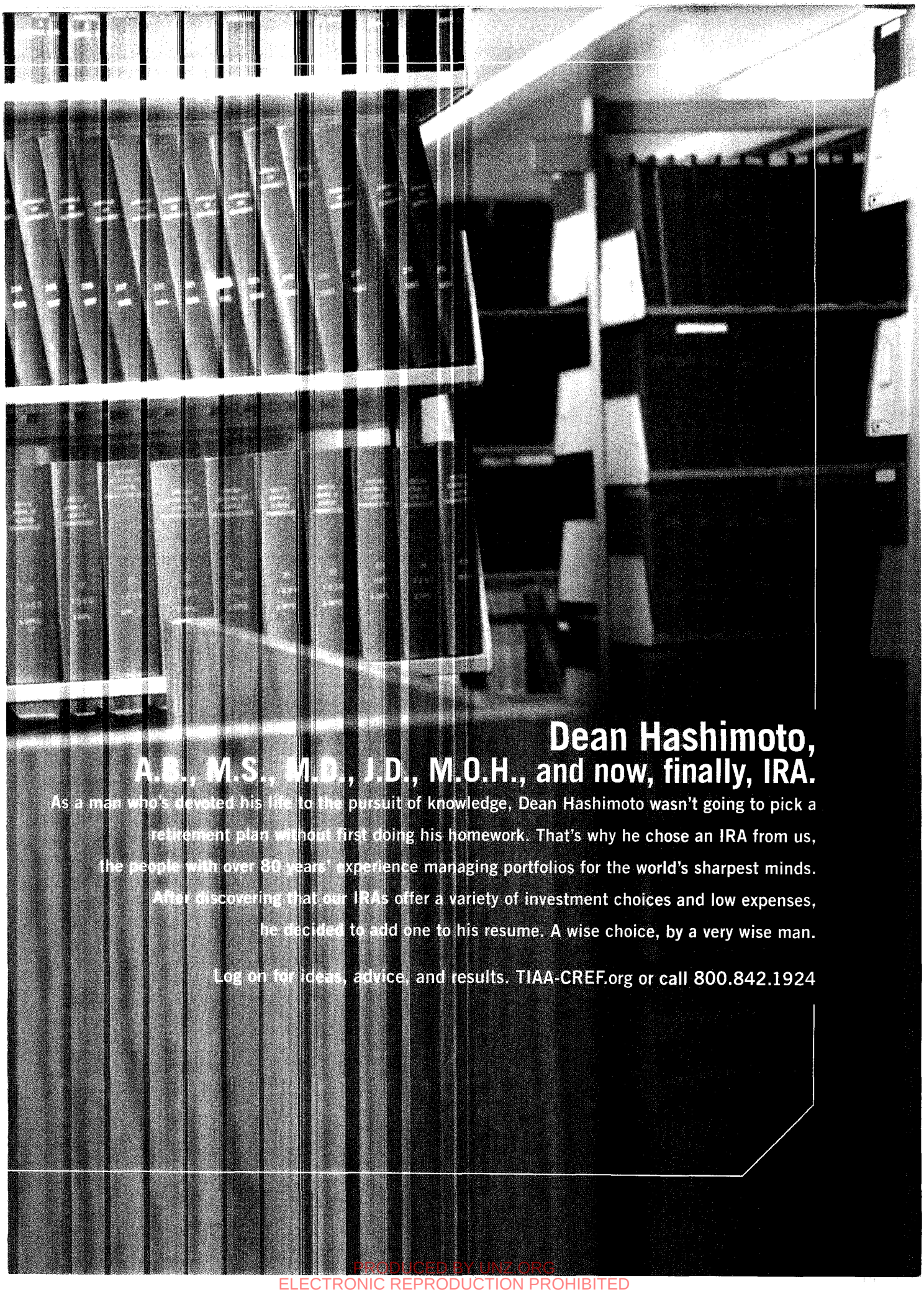

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a word that signifies the mixture of Spanish and indigenous blood.

I hope, though, that Rodriguez isn't suggesting that skin color and ancestry aren't divisive issues among contemporary Latinos. One need only glance at Spanish-language television to notice the absence of dark-skinned mestizos or *indigenas* on many programs, especially the popular telenovelas. And why are the political elites in most of Latin and South America made up of folks no darker than Antonio Banderas? Or consider the lowly status of "Indians" in Mexico, a status that Oaxacan immigrants experience north of the border.

Rodriguez mentions that "Asians and Latinos ... are most open to intermarriage." But with whom? Almost exclusively Caucasians. Mexican-Americans are far more willing to find mates among white Americans than among black ones, no matter what common legacy of discrimination blacks and browns have historically dealt with in America.

Terrence Butcher
Glendora, Calif.

Gregory Rodriguez replies:

Indeed, Jewishness—like Mexicanness—is not a racial category, and I did not mean to imply that it was. Nonetheless, American Jews can be considered a group of people defined by distinctive shared cultural traits. As the historian Hasia Diner, of New York University, has written, "Judaism the religion [has] existed in tandem with this other thing we might call Jewishness as ethnicity. Jewishness as peoplehood."

My article was not about race in "Latin and South America," as Terrence Butcher puts it. Nor was I implying that "skin color and ancestry aren't divisive issues" in contemporary Mexico. However, it is not news that Mexico has its own racial hierarchy. In fact, many of the mestizo migrants with whom my article is concerned are refugees from inequality in their country of origin.

But it is a big mistake to equate the racial attitudes of the white elite that runs Mexican television with the attitudes of darker-skinned emigrants. Although white elites, both above and below the Rio Grande, have always had more of a stake in maintaining notions of racial purity, mestizos—by virtue of their mixed heritage—have usually had a more fluid view of race. This has been particularly true of those who trekked northward. Originally settled largely by mestizos, New Spain's northwestern frontier—today's American Southwest—was significantly less racially stratified than either Mexico's interior or the eastern United States.

Mexican-Americans who intermarry don't marry Anglos "almost exclusively." In California, although Anglo-Hispanic babies do make up the largest portion (53 percent) of multiracial and multi-ethnic births (Anglos and Hispanics are, after all, the two largest groups in the state), Hispanic-black and Hispanic-Asian babies together account for a significant 13 percent of the state's mixed births.

"Catch and Release"

Unfortunately, Margaret Talbot's article on prison releases came too soon to address a bizarre practice that has made news lately. Some states have arbitrarily released prisoners in order to make cuts in their corrections budgets—as if a high rate of incarceration is a luxury that the public can afford only during a strong economy, like a new sculpture in the lobby of the statehouse. Talbot has put her finger on part of the problem: we tend to think of incarceration as an end in itself, not as a means of establishing a safer society once the prisoner is released. If we really based our sentencing policy on the need to protect the public, releasing prisoners for budgetary reasons would be as unthinkable as eliminating police or fire protection. Anyone who can be released because of a budget crunch shouldn't be in prison in the first place.

Duncan Vinson
Pawcatuck, Conn.

"A Grand Compromise"

As one of the directors of a charter school in Washington, D.C., I have seen the beneficial effects of the competitive "market" environment that James Pinkerton advocates for public schools. When families are allowed to choose the schools they think will best serve their children, failing schools lose students and funding and are ultimately closed forever. Effective schools gain students and funding, and their programs are replicated.

As Pinkerton suggests, the potential for the federal government to eliminate these inequalities over time—and to put our high ideals above individual and parochial interests—is enormous. But the government would have to enforce locally unpopular policies with a great deal of controversy, as was the case with racial desegregation. Many upper-middle-class parents would resent having to take resources away from their children's schools or having to pay more to support those schools. Great moral leadership by the President and Congress would be needed to overcome the powerful constituencies of affluent families who want to see their children maintain a competitive educational and economic advantage over other students. But in the long term this is the only equitable, democratic, and effective way to improve American education as a whole.

Christopher C. Cuozzo
Hyde Leadership Public Charter School
Washington, D.C.

James Pinkerton's proposal is enticing, but it won't work as intended. The fundamental problem of "underperforming schools," which is code for schools that serve poor and minority students, is that those students go to class with huge deficits in socialization, motivation, and intellectual development. Which school in Pinkerton's proposal will willingly enroll these hard-to-teach students? They cost too much in terms of time, effort, and money to make them attractive candidates.

Though under Pinkerton's plan students are allowed to apply to any school they wish, they may not be guaranteed admission. Even if they are allowed to enroll, they will be the first ones expelled if they don't perform and behave. Schools that are forced to accept such problem students will close their doors rather than try to educate the uneducable as long as federal funding is fixed at a certain amount per student. The self-corrective market theory that Pinkerton envisions does not apply to education any more than economies of scale and other business approaches do.

Walt Gardner
Los Angeles, Calif.

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Although I am in complete agreement with James Pinkerton's thesis that public school funding should be liberated from the local-property-tax system, I must criticize the graph used in his article to illustrate that "funding disparities between states partly explain the gaps in student achievement." It presents data for average per-pupil funding and composite NAEP scores for only thirty states, omitting many in the Midwest. The inclusion of Iowa, the Dakotas, and Nebraska, where student scores are high and cost per pupil is below the national average, would have greatly weakened the visual illustration that student funding is a major determinant of achievement.

Anthony G. Montag
Chicago, Ill.

"The Fuel Subsidy We Need"

Ricardo Bayon's article, like most articles on the so-called "hydrogen economy," fails to address the fundamental issue, which is where the hydrogen is to come from. Coal, oil, and uranium are primary fuels, in that they can be dug out of the ground, refined, and burned—or consumed in a nuclear reactor—to yield more energy than was used in the extraction and refining process. This is not the case with hydrogen. Large reserves of pure hydrogen are not lying around the planet waiting to be exploited. Hydrogen is a secondary fuel, more comparable to electricity than to fossil fuels. To extract hydrogen from water (Bayon's words) requires the input of at least as much energy as is recovered when the hydrogen is burned in a fuel cell. Furthermore, this energy has to be put in the form of electricity, most of which is currently generated by fossil-fuel-fired power plants.

Overall, the energy conversion from fossil fuel to electricity to hydrogen to motive power by means of a fuel cell is less efficient than the direct burning of gasoline in a hybrid automobile. And Bayon's alternative suggestion, to extract hydrogen from natural gas, does not really work either: because the energy content of the hydrogen in natural gas is substantially less than that of the carbon, more than half of the energy available in the natural gas would be discarded. If we cannot produce enough natural gas to power our fleet of vehicles directly, we surely cannot produce enough to power that same fleet after discarding more than half of the energy available.

To convert all the nation's vehicles to fuel cells using hydrogen would probably require us to double our present electricity-generation capacity. How are we to do this while reducing our use of imported oil? If we could do it economically with wind, solar, geothermal, hydroelectric, or tidal power, we would already be doing so. Unfortunately, "hydrogen economy" is just another way of saying "nuclear economy."

Hugo Madden
Palo Alto, Calif.

Water can be a source of hydrogen, as Ricardo Bayon correctly states, but he leaves out of the equation the energy needed to extract from a molecule of water the two hydrogen atoms that are tightly bound to one oxygen atom. Electrolysis is the process by which electricity can be used to separate them, but the electrical-energy input is greater than the energy available in the resulting hydrogen. For powering a vehicle, hydrogen's advantage over electricity from batteries is that it contains more energy per pound (or, in liquid form, more energy in the same volume). Thus it is appropriate to call hydrogen a storage medium rather than a source of energy.

The public-policy debate on energy is best served by technically sound and complete proposals. Proponents of fuel cells should include as part of their proposals ideas for the source of energy to produce the hydrogen that will run the fuel cells. Then we can discuss the relative merits of solar, wind, and nuclear energy, and of conservation, for ending our dependence on foreign oil. When one weighs all the costs, I believe, many untapped forms of conservation are still the least expensive means of reducing oil dependency.

Lawrence Schoen
Columbia, Md.

Ricardo Bayon replies:

Naturally, I agree with both Hugo Madden and Lawrence Schoen when they point out that hydrogen is not a primary source of energy. But hydrogen will let us run our cars and trucks on electricity as opposed to oil—a transformation that would allow us to use renewable energy (wind, solar, geothermal) to run our cars and trucks; to shift from highly decentralized "non-point" sources of pollution (our cars) to more centralized point sources of pollution (our generating stations), thus making pollution easier to control and reduce; and, perhaps most important, to one day generate all the energy we need to power our economy. None of these are negligible benefits. Both wind and solar technologies are growing at breakneck speed. And wind energy in some places is already cost-competitive with natural gas. So although a "hydrogen economy," if structured incorrectly, could indeed mean a nuclear or a coal economy (as Mr. Madden suggests), it could also mean a solar or a wind economy. Contrary to what Mr. Madden implies, we do have a choice.

I agree with Mr. Schoen, however, that conservation is still the best, the fastest, the most effective, and the least expensive way to reduce our country's oil addiction.

"The American Paradox"

As evidence of Americans' exceptional creativity, Ted Halstead writes that "we boast ... almost three times as many Nobel laureates as Britain, our closest competitor." But the United States has nearly five times Britain's population. On a per capita basis, Britain is one of ten European countries that best us on this measure. The tiny island nation of St. Lucia, with two laureates and a current population of 144,000, is often considered the world leader.

Paul von Hippel
Columbus, Ohio

Ted Halstead replies:

The United States indeed trails a number of European countries in Nobel Prizes per capita, but recent trends could change that. In the past decade the United States (with a mere five percent of the world's population) has taken home more medals than the rest of the world combined. And Europe, despite home-field advantage, produces fewer laureates than it used to.

Alas, the United States will probably never catch up to St. Lucia.

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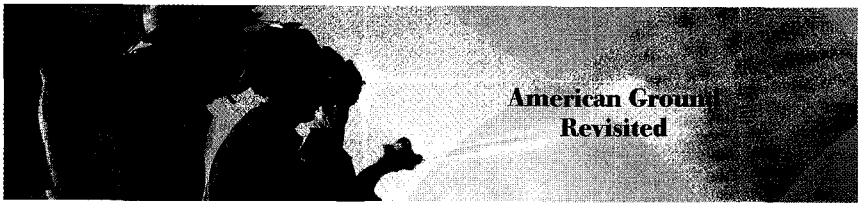

American Ground Revisited

I am a regular reader of your fine periodical and an avid fan of William Langewiesche's insightful, compelling, and usually meticulously researched articles. Yet I read with growing outrage and skepticism his recent trilogy, "American Ground." I am a New York City firefighter who, although not on duty, arrived at the site minutes after the second tower came down and worked there for several weeks on a detail. I must take exception to several assertions made in these articles, which are offensive to my profession and my code of ethics, defy common sense, and are simply untrue.

I have been working for the FDNY for twenty-four years, and have never encountered "the little-known dirty secret that things disappear." As for the ridiculous story of looted Gap jeans: is it logical to assume that firefighters responding to the largest and most deadly fire of their careers, with a horrific loss of human life, would proceed to the concourse level with the intention of securing a 34 x 34 boot-cut jean? Note that the location of the destroyed rig necessitates that the items stolen would have to have been taken prior to the towers' collapse.

Thomas Kreuzer
Baldwin, N.Y.

As a reader of *The Atlantic*, I was very surprised to see your comments in support of William Langewiesche's new book. I understand that you have a loyalty to your writers. But as an IAFF Local 2707 professional firefighter, I find the book's reference to looting by firefighters insulting beyond words. This call was the defining moment in every one of those firefighters' careers. To think that a firefighter would steal a pair of blue jeans while his brothers were attempting to save lives is unfathomable. How could you support such an assertion?

Sean O'Gorman
Oswego, N.Y.

Beginning in 1975, I spent ten years as a firefighter in a small industrial city in Wisconsin. Like New York's firemen, we lived in the firehouse for twenty-four hours at a stretch. Like them, we were a tight-knit bunch who did a dangerous job that few people outside the fire service appreciated or even understood. As a result, I probably understood more fully than many other Americans what New York's firefighters were feeling in the weeks after 9/11. I also understand their reaction to William Langewiesche's book *American Ground*—but I don't share it. Firefighters can learn a lot from this book, if only they are willing. The entire American fire service needs to ask itself some hard questions about the events of 9/11. Why did so many firefighters go into those buildings? Why were they so poorly prepared to operate in that environment? How did the FDNY's systems of command and control fail? The last and greatest tragedy of 9/11 would be for the fire service to refuse to learn from the events of that day.

Mel Washburn
Chicago, Ill.

Thanks to *The Atlantic Monthly* for William Langewiesche's outstanding and revealing account of his observations at the WTC disaster. I have seen and listened to everything I could on TV about the fall of the towers: heartbreaking, emotional stories of those people who survived and those who didn't. It is fitting that someone tell "the rest of the story"—that we know what our people went through "unbuilding" the site, from day one to the finish. I say, God bless them as well.

Mary Lou Bjornaas
Prescott, Ariz.

William Langewiesche replies:

During the past few months the articles published in The Atlantic *(July/August, September, and October 2002) under the title "American Ground," now a book of the same name, have given rise to an intermittent series of protests in New York City. At the broadest level the protests concern my depiction of conflict among members of various groups at the World Trade Center site, notably conflict involving firefighters. More directly they concern my observation that low-grade looting of various kinds was a fact of life at the site, and was engaged in by small numbers of people from every group. And most specifically they concern the interpretation of an episode I described, alluded to by the letter writers (although the quote about "the little-known dirty secret" is in fact not my words), in which blue jeans from a retail store were found in a fire truck that had been crushed and buried under the pile.*

On the first two matters there is little to add. Tribalism was a fact of life on the pile, and a growing problem apparent to most people there; press reports from the time make note of it in various ways. The conflict was perhaps not surprising (lack of conflict would have been), but it posed serious challenges to the cleanup operation nonetheless. As for looting, the fact that it occurred in a modest but widespread way, and that some small proportion of every group at the site was implicated, was an open secret to everyone working on the pile, and to city officials and reporters, and was scarcely a matter for comment. ("You had to be blind not to notice," one of the construction-company executives explained matter-of-factly.) The looting began early, according to police officers I interviewed at the site; as I wrote, "it started in the shopping complex" during the initial evacuation, before the South Tower fell, "with the innocuous filching of cigarettes and soda pop," and it expanded. The looting was never the focus of my reporting. I avoided writing about many cases that I knew about. When I did address such activities, I deliberately used only general terms, and addressed them in only a handful of sentences. I tried to make it clear that for the most part the looting was casually opportunistic. My writing has never been sensationalistic—and it was certainly not in "American Ground." However, to have completely ignored the phenomenon of looting at the World Trade Center site, much less to have denied it, would have been dishonest.

With regard to the jeans episode, the pre-

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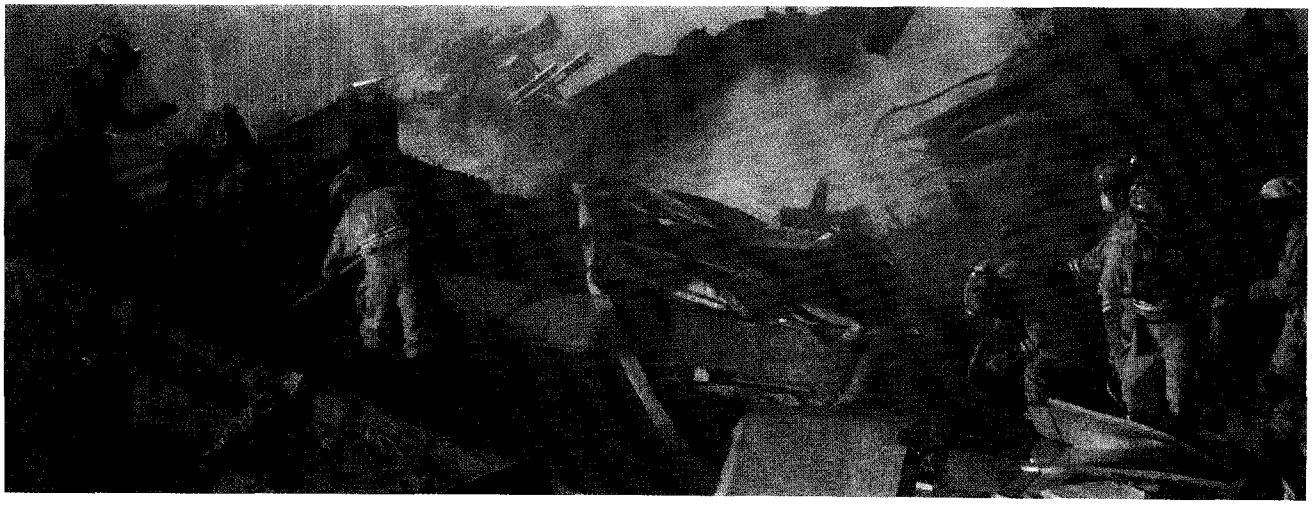
cipitating event, as noted, was the discovery of a fire truck, deep under the rubble, in which jeans from a retail store were found. More to the point of my general subject, which was the engineering and cleanup process under way, was an argument that broke out on the pile immediately after the truck was found. Descriptions of the argument were provided to me shortly after it occurred by multiple independent eyewitnesses, people well known to me who for months had proved to be reliable and steady sources, and who held important jobs on the pile. As I described the scene, the argument broke out when some of the construction workers, who by then had grown extremely impatient with the firefighters, interpreted the discovery as evidence of looting, and taunted the firefighters accordingly. The firefighters defended themselves by asserting that the jeans had been blown into the fire truck. The construction workers would have none of it. Their reactions seemed to me to be extreme and unnecessarily provocative—as I believed my description made clear. Indeed, my reason for including this episode was not the question of looting—something I felt I had sufficiently discussed before—but, rather, the continuing tribalism and conflicts between the groups, which seemed to me to be a more important subject, and certainly more pertinent to my topic, which was the "unbuilding" of the Trade Center. That point is made explicitly a few sentences later: "The site would never stand united, as sloganeers said it should."

So allow me to say it again, as I have consistently said by now on many occasions, in writing and on the air: the jeans story was strictly related to reactions and interpretations on the pile—to the emotional and divisive social dynamics on a day in late fall, three months after the towers came down. It was not related to whatever happened on 9/11—and it was not an allegation of looting. I very specifically suppressed all identities on both sides of that story, in an attempt to keep the narrative focused on what mattered: a growing threat to the social order on the pile, which somehow the American system would have to grapple with. The passage was framed in those terms, and in a past tense and a context that I assumed would make it clear I was describing nothing more than what I intended to—a significant confrontation at a very important work site.

That being said, it is clear that the passage has been misinterpreted by many as an accusation. One reason is that, especially in the course of protests over the book, pieces of the episode have frequently been torn from context and turned into tabloid snippets and disembodied sound bites, and in that form have acquired a life of their own. But frankly, some of the misinterpretation may also be due to an unintentionally ambiguous choice of wording. The statement "It was hard to avoid the conclusion that the looting had begun even before the first tower fell" can be read as my own assessment, rather than, as was intended, the description of an assessment by others. The addition of just a few words ("In their eyes, it was hard to avoid . . . ") would have made my meaning unequivocally clear.

Given the degree to which the misinterpretations have been promulgated, I intend to address the question of interpretation in an afterword to the paperback edition of the book (to be published in September), underscoring my meaning. I will also describe there some of the controversy that has followed publication—and mention some details and sidelights that have emerged in the year since I finished my reporting. I have received a large number of letters from readers, many of whom worked on the pile and have personal observations to share. A number of people have suggested corrections on various points, and any of the corrections that have merit will also be addressed. Finally, I will speak to the difficulties of writing "history in the present tense"—that is, trying to produce an honest description that has distance and durability, while working more or less contemporaneously with an emotionally searing event.

The World Trade Center site was an extremely complex place, loaded with emotion and political symbolism, full of action and confusion, with thousands of people involved, and many efforts proceeding in parallel, as well as many possible interpretations. As I knew from the start, certainly no one view could encompass it. I restricted my own view mostly to the engineering and deconstruction process. I wrote about it candidly and in depth, not in encyclopedic terms but in the first person, as I always do, serving as my readers' eyes and expressing my opinions openly. I saw—and continue to see—that recovery effort as reflecting a special form of American greatness, an intricate weave that included diverse acts and motivations and also a culture of improvisational genius that extended to thousands of people on the pile, from every group. I respect the right of others to disagree strongly with my views. Such disagreement is in part what I was writing about and, indeed, celebrating at the site.



ANDREA BOOHER/FEMA

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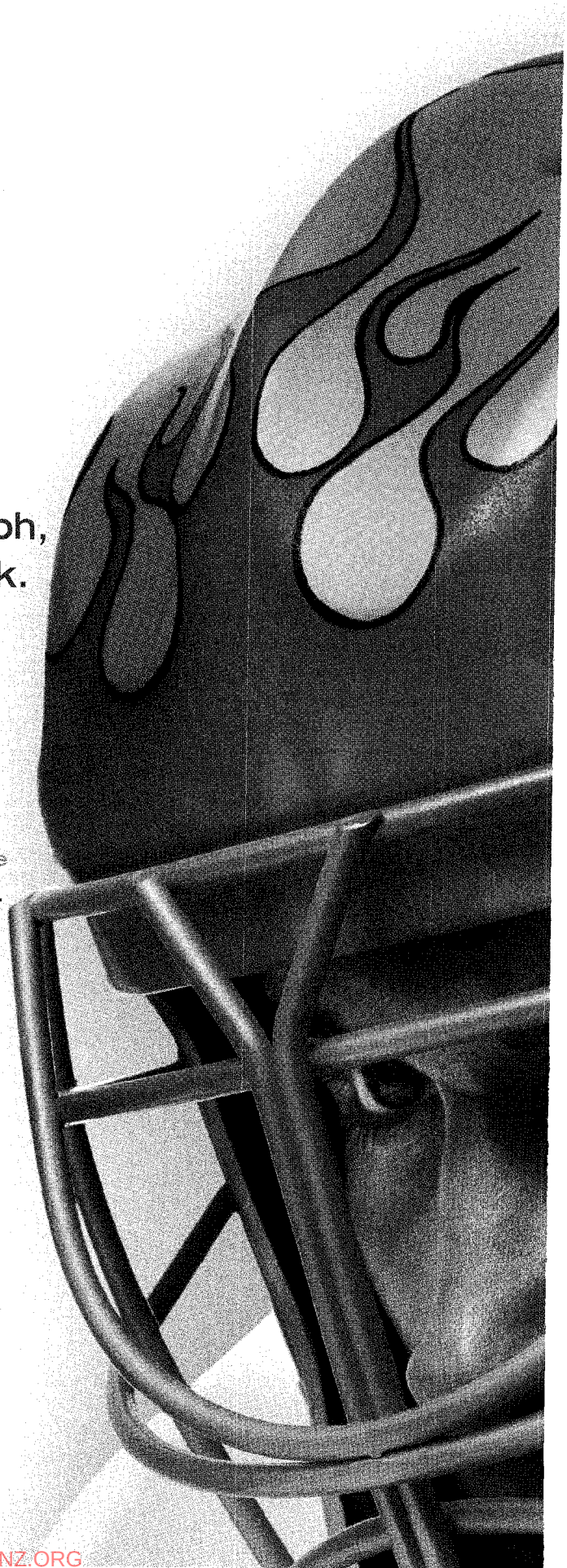

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THE AGENDA

THIS MONTH, *essays on lessons from Whitman, Gogol, and the history of tolerance in Christianity and Islam*

DAVID BROOKS
"No one since Whitman has captured quite so well the motivating hopefulness that propels American policy and makes the nation a great and restless force in the world." PAGE 32

JONATHAN RAUCH
"[Apatheism] is the product of a determined cultural effort to discipline the religious mindset, and often of an equally determined personal effort to master the spiritual passions. It is not a lapse. It is an achievement." PAGE 34

BERNARD LEWIS
"The very notion of an authority empowered to rule on questions of belief was alien to traditional Islamic thought and practice. It has become less alien." PAGE 36

ROBERT D. KAPLAN
"Foreigners often find Americans as a group more than a little hard to take, in their overt nationalism, deep religiosity ... battered but defiant idealism, and propensity for searing public debate. These are precisely the qualities that are disappearing in Europe." PAGE 44

PRIMARY SOURCES
"Had [Wellington] not commanded the British forces that day, Napoleon ... would have had a 79 percent chance of winning at Waterloo." PAGE 46

THE WORLD IN NUMBERS
"In the first three weeks of Operation Desert Shield ... the United States moved more troops and equipment than in the first three months *of the Korean war."* PAGE 50

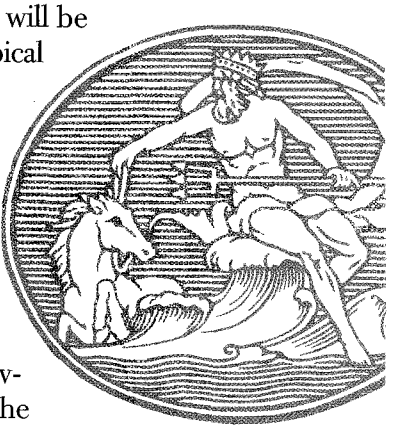
WHAT NOW?

A letter from Kuwait City

BY MICHAEL KELLY

.....

One of the larger news features of mid-February was the arrival in Baghdad of some 200 peace missionaries from around the world, who had come, they announced in appropriately grave tones, to serve as "human shields"—to put themselves between the targets in Iraq and the bombers of the mad George W. Bush. The British contingent of the mission, traveling photogenically in two old-fashioned red double-decker buses, got the lion's share of the press, thanks in part to the media talents of sixty-eight-year-old Godfrey Meynell, who has an interestingly counterintuitive résumé for this sort of thing (he is a former Foreign Office man and a former high sheriff of Derbyshire), an attractive stiff-upper-lip yet unassuming-bloke-of-the-people manner, and the natural hamminess of a well-aged Smithfield. For a week or so you could scarcely pick up a London paper without catching a breeze from Meynell's stiff upper lip in action. "I do think if we have a large number of people at the sites, it will be very difficult for them to bomb," he said in a typical utterance. "I really do think so."



On March 2 *The Sunday Telegraph* reported that almost all of Britain's eleven would-be shields were among those who had decided, on second thought, that sequestering themselves in buildings slated to receive high explosives was actually too dangerous, and had quietly slipped away to home. The fault, apparently, lay with the perhaps naive Iraqi government, which apparently took at face value the missionaries' pronouncements of their willingness to risk life for peace. As the *Telegraph* reported, after nearly two weeks had passed in which only about sixty-five of the shields "had so far agreed to take up positions at the oil refineries, power plants and water-purification sites" selected by the Iraqi regime as "strategic sites," the government group hosting the pacifists, the Organization of Friendship, Peace and Solidarity, had presented them with an ultimatum: choose their spots or leave. Meynell, who was among the relative few to have bedded down at a potential crater (a Baghdad power station), was admirably forthright in admitting his new understanding of realities. "I am ashamed to be leaving you," he told the workers at the power station, "but I'm going out of pure, cold fear." It had come to him, he said, that "this power plant is right next to a bridge, surrounded by Republican

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Guards. It's obviously a prime target."

When the anti-warriors depart the theater of the coming war, you know you are nearing the end of that familiar thing we have come to know as the phony peace. What is oddly reassuring or entirely depressing about phony peaces is how they are always phony in exactly the same way. Twelve years ago, in the last weeks before the previous war with Saddam Hussein, I flew to Amman, en route to Baghdad, in a plane that was thickly settled with peace missionaries of one stripe or another. Daniel Ortega and Louis Farrakhan were up in first class, and back in economy was a party of some twenty or so mostly young people, led by a man named Stephen Zunes, who was an assistant professor of political science at Whitman College, in Walla Walla, Washington. Zunes explained the rationale of his mission to me. "You see," he said, "you can't really have war unless you dehumanize the enemy. And dialogue humanizes folks. We will meet with the Iraqis and when we go back we will share with Americans that they are human beings. We will be able to say, 'Look, we talked to these folks and they are human beings and they are going to be killed if we go forward with this war.'"

At least several hundred people of this sort passed through Baghdad in the last days of the phony peace, and they all made the evening news, and they all left before the bombing began. Then as now, the Pope was calling for peace and the Russians and the French and the Arab states were expressing dismay and outrage and offering elaborate diplomatic alternatives that were not intended to be acted upon. Then as now, Saddam and his minions passed the days alternating between puffer-fish blustering and ostentatious displays of "cooperation."

Now as then, the better sort of global citizens are concerned with explaining to the great oaf America that war is not the answer. "Is it the right time to close the door?" Hans Blix, the chief UN weapons inspector, asked plaintively. "A crisis of this kind should be solved by exclusively peaceful means," declared Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose handling of the crisis in Chechnya has been much remarked on for its restraint. "The military option should only be a last resort," lectured France—a consistent nation, if nothing else: "Frenchmen, do not attempt to commit any action which might bring terrible reprisals," Marshal Pétain said in an appeal to his countrymen for continued collaboration with the Nazis on the day after the Americans and the British arrived in Normandy to exercise the military option.

It is all enough to give phony peaces a bad name. The original phony peace was at least, so to speak, real. France and England had desperately sound reasons for appeasing Hitler and avoiding war with Hitler's Reich: if there was a war, France and England would need to fight it. And having seen a generation of their men, and their national power, destroyed in the Great War, and having in consequence all but disarmed themselves, they were in no position to fight. Neville Chamberlain is derided for his "peace for our time"; indeed, his Blixian self-delusion is cringe-making still: "In spite of the hardness and ruthlessness I thought I saw in his face," he wrote after meeting Hitler, "I got the impression that here was a man who could be relied upon . . ." Today we remember Chamberlain as the consummate fool, and it seems obvious to us what seemed obvious to Chamberlain's political opponent and successor. Britain had faced a choice "between shame and war," Winston Churchill wrote. "We have chosen shame, and we will get war." But it wasn't obvious to many until forced and forced and forced again on them, and it was Chamberlain, not Churchill, who was cheered in the streets when he brought back the peace that the people so badly wanted.

Today's phony peaces really are phony. Now (I am writing this in early March), as in the winter months of 1990–1991, no one has any real belief that peace is at hand, or may be brought to hand. War is expected, by everyone, and it is this expectation that allows the luxury of the phony peace—an interim between the advent of expectation and the arrival of reality, during which concerned parties may enjoy protesting against a war they know their protests will not stop. The phony peace provides a period of global theater in which the natural order of things may be reasserted: France behaves like France, Russia behaves like Russia, the United Nations behaves like the United Nations, America behaves like America. It is comforting in its way.

I spent the last days of the first Gulf War's phony peace in Baghdad, and I am spending the last days of this one's in Kuwait, soon to take part in the experiment of "embedding," as the jargon has it, some 500 journalists with the U.S. military for the duration of what is generally expected to be a short, exceedingly one-sided conflict. On the whole, I'd say, the phoniness quotient is down this time. We are spared, at least, much of the death-and-destruction-and-quagmire talk that preceded the last conflict here. The lessons of the campaign in Afghanistan, adding to the lessons of the campaigns in Kosovo and Bosnia, have sunk in. The U.S. armed forces enjoy a technological superiority like nothing the world has seen before; they are, in a real sense, not even fighting the same war as their opponents—or in the same century. No one argues much now about whether these forces are capable of crushing even very serious opposition, and almost no one argues that Iraq offers serious opposition. Rather, the argument concerns whether the employment of this almost unfathomable power will be largely for good, leading to the liberation of a tyrannized people and the spread of freedom, or largely for bad, leading to imperialism and colonialism, with a consequent corruption of America's own values and freedoms. This question is real enough and more: probably the next hundred years hinges on the answer.

Michael Kelly is The Atlantic*'s editor at large.*

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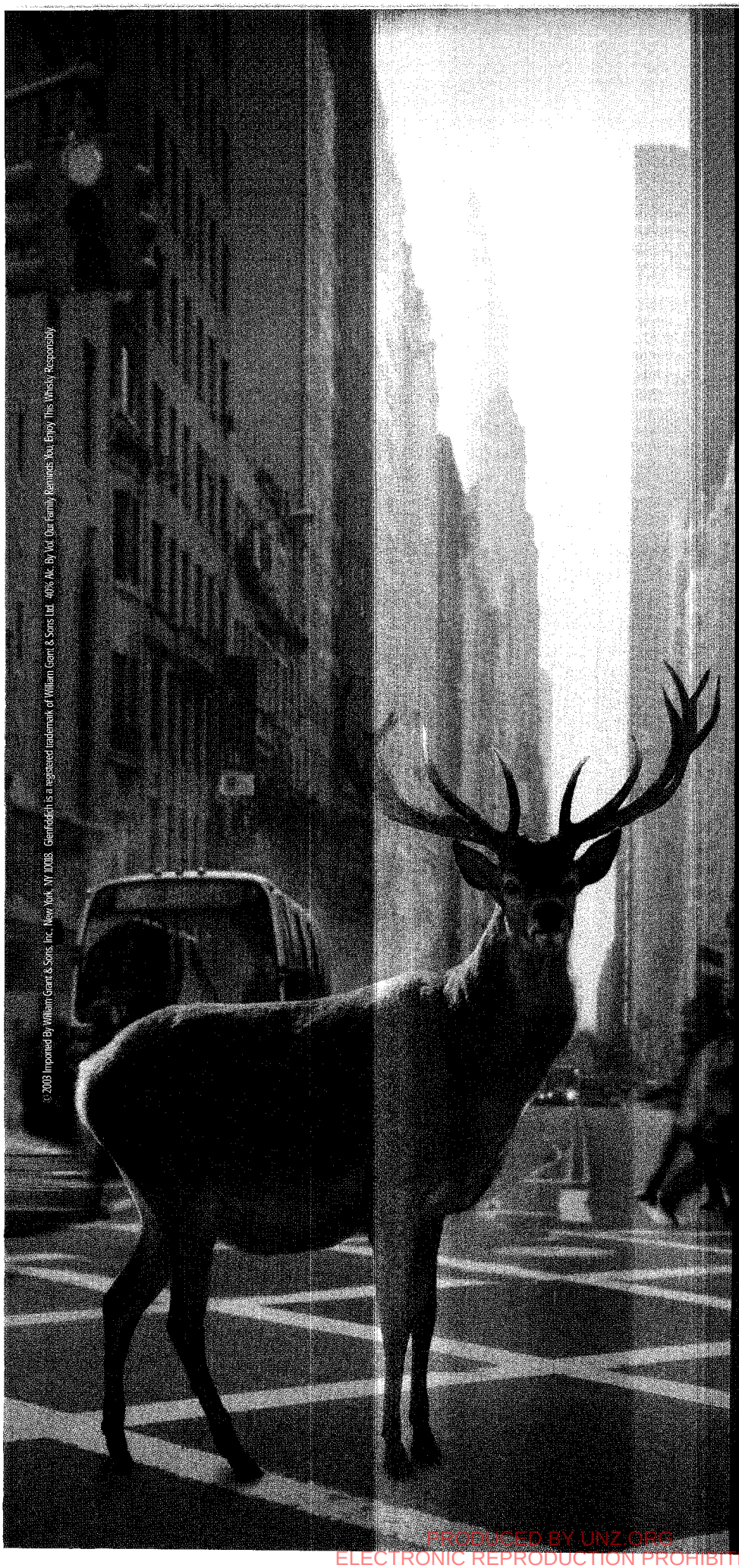

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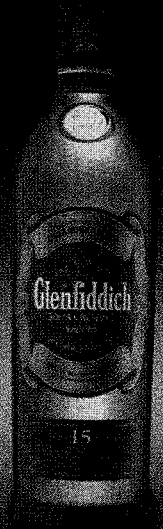

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WHAT WHITMAN KNEW

Walt Whitman's "Democratic Vistas" is still the most trenchant explanation of American policies and ambitions

IDEAS

DAVID BROOKS

Whenever I hear people say something stupid about America, which is often these days, I want to punch them in the nose and hand them Walt Whitman's 1871 essay "Democratic Vistas." The punch would temporarily stem the flow of idiocy, and the copy of "Democratic Vistas" would give them some accurate sense of what the United States is all about.

I should make it clear from the start that "Democratic Vistas" can be an infuriating piece of writing. Whitman could not be bothered with mundane considerations like clarity, coherence, and organizational logic. But it survives as our nation's most brilliant political sermon because it embodies the exuberant energy of American society—the energy that can make other peoples so nervous—and it captures in its hodgepodge nature both the high aspirations and the sordid realities of everyday life.

Whitman grappled with a central paradox: America strives to be great and powerful as a nation so that it can bring about the full flowering of individuals. "Political democracy, as it exists and practically works in America, with all its threatening evils, supplies a training school for making first-class men," he declared. "It is life's gymnasium, not of good only, but of all." Americans, he continued, are or should be "freedom's athletes," filled with "brave delight," audacious aims, and restless hopes.

Whitman longed for democratic noblemen and noblewomen who would be "in youth, fresh, ardent, emotional, aspiring, full of adventure; at maturity, brave, perceptive, under control, neither too talkative nor too reticent, neither flippant nor somber; of the bodily figure, the movements easy, the complexion showing the best blood, somewhat flushed, breast expanded, an erect attitude, a voice whose sound outvies music, eyes of calm and steady gaze, yet capable also of flashing." These people would realize themselves amid political combat, hard work, social reform, nation building, and global causes: "So will individuality, and unimpeded branchings, flourish best under imperial republican forms."

The forces of affluence, fashion, comfort, modesty, and civility were, Whitman feared, breeding "inertness and fossilism" in his countrymen and countrywomen. He embraced, as countermeasures, spirit and vivacity in every form, no matter how vulgar. "I hail with joy the oceanic, variegated, intense practical energy, the demand for facts, even the business materialism of the current age," he wrote. And he harbored the fervent hope that in the decades and centuries to come these raw energies would fuel spiritual and intellectual breakthroughs to create largeness of soul. "Thus we presume to write, as it were, upon things that exist not, and travel by maps yet unmade, and a blank. But the throes of birth are upon us."

A cosmic optimism pervades the essay, as it does all of Whitman's works. But "Democratic Vistas" was actually written in a mood of some bleakness. Whitman had believed that the Civil War would cleanse the nation of its most serious ills. As the war approached and then commenced, he railed against business interests and war opponents—and wrote several recruiting poems ("Thunder on! stride on, Democracy! strike with vengeful stroke!"). During the conflict he nursed the wounded. Literary critics sometimes emphasize the homoerotic nature of his attraction to the soldiers, but there was more to it than that. He admired their selfless heroism and their calmness and bravery as death approached. "Grand, common stock!" he exulted in "Democratic Vistas."

Whitman worked as a government clerk during the war, climbing from post to post, admiring Grant and worshipping Lincoln. Like everyone else, he had his moments of despair. "Every once in a while I feel so horrified & disgusted," he wrote to his mother in 1863. "[The war] seems to me like a great slaughter-house & the men mutually butchering each other." But even in such a dark moment, he continued, "I feel how impossible it appears again, to retire from this contest, until we have carried our points."

After the Union victory and Lincoln's sacrificial death, Whitman hoped that grief would cement the people together and call forth each person's best self. But of course the heroic mood did not survive. Life sank back to its normal sordid pattern. Political and business corruption were rampant. The middle classes returned to their trivial enjoyments.

In April of 1867 the prophetic British historian Thomas Carlyle published an essay called "Shooting Niagara—and After?" It was a vituperative attack on democracy, equality, and the liberation of the slaves. Where the common people rule, he argued, all culture is brought low, and life becomes mediocre and vulgar. Whitman took up his pen to defend democracy and the United States. But by the time he completed his reply, "Democratic Vistas," he had to admit that Carlyle was right on many points.

Whitman's essay contains vacillations that give it a head-spinning quality. One paragraph expresses revulsion over the people he saw around him.

> Never was there, perhaps, more hollowness at heart than at present, and here in the United States. Genuine belief seems to have left us … The spectacle is appalling. We live in an atmosphere of hypocrisy throughout. The men believe not in the women, nor the women in the men. A scornful superciliousness rules in literature. The aim of all the *littérateurs* is to find something to make fun of. A lot of churches, sects, etc., the most dismal phantasms I know, usurp the name of religion. Conversation is a mass of badinage.

The next paragraph recounts his walking the streets of New York, amid the "assemblages of the citizens in their groups, conversations, trades and evening amusements," and finding himself overcome by "exaltation" and "absolute fulfillment." In the paragraph after that he is despondent again, unable to find around him men worthy of the name, or arts worthy

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of appreciation. "A sort of dry and flat Sahara appears, these cities, crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics."

Whitman was teaching an important lesson here: It is misleading to think one can arrive at a single, consistent judgment about the United States (or perhaps about any society). When it comes to the health of the country and its culture, the highest highs and the lowest lows are simultaneous and adjacent. Extremes must be accepted without regard for consistency—a lesson that our gloomy cultural critics and self-congratulatory political orators almost never get right.

In spite of his concessions to Carlyle, Whitman never fully reclined into pessimism. In the first place, his boundless energy always propelled him toward hopefulness, toward some activity that would lead to a brighter future. Second, unlike most cultural critics, he was not a snob, putting himself above those whose spiritual flatness he criticized. His love for his fellow Americans, as they actually lived and breathed around him, prevailed. No matter how trivial his neighbors might appear on the surface, he always saw through to their underlying nobility. "Shams, etc., will always be the show, like ocean's scum," he acknowledged. Even so, the American people were "the peaceablest and most good natured race in the world, and the most personally independent and intelligent." They were reliable in emergencies and possessed "a certain breadth of historic grandeur, of peace or war," in that regard surpassing the citizenry of any other great nation. The behavior of the average American during the Civil War, he contended, proved beyond all doubt "that popular democracy, whatever its faults and dangers, practically justifies itself beyond the proudest claims and wildest hopes of its enthusiasts." No future age could entirely know how the unknown rank and file of both armies fought and sacrificed for their ideals and proved themselves through "fearful tests."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEVE BRODNER

Whitman had a remarkably subtle sense of America's unique historical mission. Many people before and since have argued that the United States was assigned by God or destiny to spread democracy and advance human freedom around the globe. But Whitman learned, perhaps from Lincoln, that this is both a glorious and a tragic assignment. Reading "Democratic Vistas" is a bit like looking at a painting of the Annunciation, as Mary glimpses the divine but sad future of her son.

Whitman foresaw that the country's task of promoting liberty and democracy would be an arduous one. He further foresaw that we would have to embrace that task even at times when life at home was far from perfect. America's mission would not always be a romantic quest headed by dashing, heroic figures. It would sometimes be led by Presidents (and others) who failed to be impressive or inspirational. "Even today, amid these whirls, incredible flippancy, and blind fury of parties, infidelity, entire lack of first-class captains and leaders," the United States is still destined to sail the "dangerous sea," he argued. He wrote,

> It seems as if the Almighty had spread before this nation charts of imperial destinies, dazzling as the sun, yet with many a deep intestine difficulty, and human aggregate of cankerous imperfection … You said in your soul, I will be empire of empires, overshadowing all else, past and present, putting the history of Old-World dynasties, conquests behind me, as of no account—making a new history, a history of democracy, making old history a dwarf—I alone inaugurating largeness, culminating time.

Whitman also perceived that the nation could not readily communicate its mission, either to the world or to itself. He dreamed that a crop of literary giants would emerge to develop an American soul equal to American economic and political might. "Democratic Vistas" was intended to inspire a "literatus of the modern"—poets and writers who would complete the task Whitman had begun.

It's hard these days to put that much faith in poets and writers. The geniuses Whitman envisioned have not arrived. America's greatest contributions to the world are generally found in its innovations and its actions, not in literary masterpieces. Now, more than 130 years after Whitman published "Democratic Vistas," that essay remains the best explanation of the nation's energy and aspirations.

No one since Whitman has captured quite so well the motivating hopefulness that propels American policy and makes the nation a great and restless force in the world. No other essay communicates quite so well what it is like to live constantly in the shadow of the future, trusting that tomorrow's world will be better and will redeem the incompleteness of the present. Whitman's essay, with its nuanced understanding of the American national character, stands today as a powerful rebuttal to, for example, the parades of European anti-Americans. What these groups despise is a cliché—a flat and simpleminded image of American power. They do not see, as Whitman did, that despite its many imperfections, America is a force for democracy and progress. "Far, far indeed, stretch, in distance, our Vistas!" Whitman wrote. "How much is still to be disentangled, freed!"

David Brooks, an Atlantic *correspondent, is also a contributing editor of* Newsweek, *a senior editor of* The Weekly Standard, *and a political analyst for* The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer.

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LET IT BE

The greatest development in modern religion is not a religion at all—it's an attitude best described as "apatheism"

RELIGION

JONATHAN RAUCH

It came to me recently in a blinding vision that I am an apatheist. Well, "blinding vision" may be an overstatement. "Wine-induced haze" might be more strictly accurate. This was after a couple of glasses of Merlot, when someone asked me about my religion. "Atheist," I was about to say, but I stopped myself. "I used to call myself an atheist," I said, "and I still don't believe in God, but the larger truth is that it has been years since I really cared one way or another. I'm"—that was when it hit me—"an … apatheist!"

That got a chuckle, but the point was serious. Apatheism—a disinclination to care all that much about one's own religion, and an even stronger disinclination to care about other people's—may or may not be something new in the world, but its modern flowering, particularly in ostensibly pious America, is worth getting excited about.

Apatheism concerns not what you believe but how. In that respect it differs from the standard concepts used to describe religious views and people. Atheism, for instance, is not at all like apatheism; the hot-blooded atheist cares as much about religion as does the evangelical Christian, but in the opposite direction. "Secularism" can refer to a simple absence of devoutness, but it more accurately refers to an ACLU-style disapproval of any profession of religion in public life—a disapproval that seems puritanical and quaint to apatheists. Tolerance is a magnificent concept, John Locke's inestimable gift to all mankind; but it assumes, as Locke did, that everyone brims with religious passions that everyone else must work hard to put up with.

And agnostics? True, most of them are apatheists, but most apatheists are not agnostics. Because—and this is an essential point—many apatheists are believers.

In America, as Thomas Byrne Edsall reported in these pages recently, the proportion of people who say they never go to church or synagogue has tripled since 1972, to 33 percent in 2000. Most of these people believe in God (professed atheists are very rare in the United States); they just don't care much about him. They do care a bit; but apatheism is an attitude, not a belief system, and the overriding fact is that these people are relaxed about religion.

Even regular churchgoers can, and often do, rank quite high on the apatheism scale. There are a lot of reasons to attend religious services: to connect with a culture or a community, to socialize, to expose children to religion, to find the warming comfort of familiar ritual. The softer denominations in America are packed with apatheists. The apatheism of Reform Jews is so well known as to be a staple of synagogue humor. (Orthodox rabbi to Reform rabbi: "One of my congregants says his son wants a Harley for his bar mitzvah. What's a Harley?" Reform rabbi to Orthodox rabbi: "A Harley is a motorcycle. What's a bar mitzvah?")

Finally, and this may seem strangest of all, even true-believing godliness today often has an apatheistic flavor. I have Christian friends who organize their lives around an intense and personal relationship with God, but who betray no sign of caring that I am an unrepentantly atheistic Jewish homosexual. They are exponents, at least, of the second, more important part of apatheism: the part that doesn't mind what *other* people think about God.

I believe that the rise of apatheism is to be celebrated as nothing less than a major civilizational advance. Religion, as the events of September 11 and after have so brutally underscored, remains the most divisive and volatile of social forces. To be in the grip of religious zeal is the natural state of human beings, or at least of a great many human beings; that is how much of the species seems to be wired. Apatheism, therefore, should not be assumed to represent a lazy recumbency, like my collapse into a soft chair after a long day. Just the opposite: it is the product of a determined cultural effort to discipline the religious mindset, and often of an equally determined personal effort to master the spiritual passions. It is not a lapse. It is an achievement.

"A world of pragmatic atheists," the philosopher Richard Rorty once wrote, "would be a better, happier world than our present one." Perhaps. But best of all would be a world generously leavened with apatheists: people who feel at ease with religion even if they are irreligious; people who may themselves be members of religious communities, but who are neither controlled by godly passions nor concerned about the (nonviolent, noncoercive) religious beliefs of others. In my lifetime America has taken great strides in this direction, and its example will be a source of strength, not weakness, in a world still beset by fanatical religiosity (al Qaeda) and tyrannical secularism (China).

Ronald Reagan used to insist that he was religious even though, as President, he hardly ever entered a church. It turns out he was in good company. Those Americans who tell pollsters they worship faithfully? Many of them are lying. John C. Stackhouse Jr., a professor of theology and culture, wrote recently in *American Outlook* magazine, "Beginning in the 1990s, a series of sociological studies has shown that many more Americans tell pollsters that they attend church regularly than can be found in church when teams actually count." In fact, he says, actual churchgoing may be at little more than half the professed rate. A great many Americans, like their fortieth President, apparently care about religion enough to say they are religious, but not enough to go to church.

You can snicker at Reagan and the millions of others like him; you can call them hypocrites if you like. I say, God bless them, every one.

Jonathan Rauch is an Atlantic *correspondent.*

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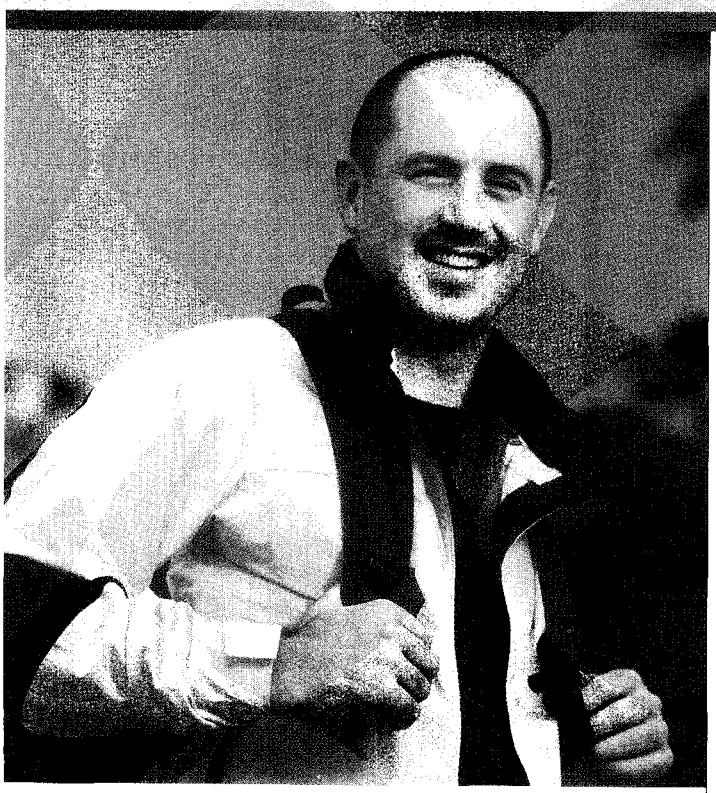

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"I'M RIGHT, YOU'RE WRONG, GO TO HELL"

Religions and the meeting of civilizations

HISTORY

BERNARD LEWIS

For a long time now it has been our practice in the modern Western world to define ourselves primarily by nationality, and to see other identities and allegiances—religious, political, and the like—as subdivisions of the larger and more important whole. The events of September 11 and after have made us aware of another perception—of a religion subdivided into nations rather than a nation subdivided into religions—and this has induced some of us to think of ourselves and of our relations with others in ways that had become unfamiliar. The confrontation with a force that defines itself as Islam has given a new relevance—indeed, urgency—to the theme of the "clash of civilizations."

At one time the general assumption of mankind was that "civilization" meant us, and the rest were uncivilized. This, as far as we know, was the view of the great civilizations of the past—in China, India, Greece, Rome, Persia, and the ancient Middle East. Not until a comparatively late stage did the idea emerge that there are different civilizations, that these civilizations meet and interact, and—even more interesting—that a civilization has a life-span: it is born, grows, matures, declines, and dies. One can perhaps trace that latter idea to the medieval Arab historian-philosopher Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), who spoke in precisely those terms, though what he discussed was not civilizations but states—or, rather, regimes. The concept wasn't really adapted to civilizations until the twentieth century.

The first writer to make the connection was the German historian Oswald Spengler. Perhaps influenced by the horrors of World War I and the defeat of imperial Germany, he looked around him and saw civilization in decline. He built a philosophy on this perception, captured in the phrase "the decline of the West"—*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. His two volumes under this title were published in 1918 and 1922. In these he discussed how different civilizations meet, interact, rise and decline, and fall. His approach was elaborated by Arnold Toynbee, who proceeded with a sort of wish list of civilizations—and, of course, also a hit list. Most recently Samuel Huntington, of Harvard University, has argued that the clash of civilizations, more than of countries or governments, is now the basic force of international relations. I think most of us would agree, and some of us have indeed said, that the clash of civilizations is an important aspect of modern international relations, though probably not many of us would go so far as to imply, as some have done, that civilizations have foreign policies and form alliances.

There have been a number of different civilizations in human history, and several are extant, though not all in the same condition. Mustafa Kemal, later known as Atatürk, dealt with the relative condition of civilizations in some of the speeches in which he urged the people of the newly established Turkish Republic to modernize. He put the issue with military directness and simplicity. People, he said, talked of this civilization and that civilization, and of interaction and influence between civilizations; but only one civilization was alive and well and advancing, and that was what he called modernity, the civilization "of our time." All the others were dying or dead, he said, and Turkey's choice was to join this civilization or be part of a dying world. The one civilization was, of course, the West.

Only two civilizations have been defined by religion. Others have had religions but are identified primarily by region and ethnicity. Buddhism has been a major religious force, and was the first to try to bring a universal message to all mankind. There is some evidence of Buddhist activities in the ancient Middle East, and the possibility has been suggested of Buddhist influence on Judaism and, therefore, on the rise of Christianity. But Buddhism has not expanded significantly for many centuries, and the countries where it flourishes—in South, Southeast, and East Asia—are defined, like their neighbors, by culture more than by creed. These other civilizations, with the brief and problematic exception of communism, have lacked the ideological capacity—and for the most part even the desire—for indefinite expansion.

Christianity and Islam are the two religions that define civilizations, and they have much in common, along with some differences. In English and in most of the other languages of the

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Christian world we have two words, "Christianity" and "Christendom." Christianity is a religion, a system of belief and worship with certain ecclesiastical institutions. Christendom is a civilization that incorporates elements that are non-Christian or even anti-Christian. Hitler and the Nazis, it may be recalled, are products of Christendom, but hardly of Christianity. When we talk of Islam, we use the same word for both the religion and the civilization, which can lead to misunderstanding. The late Marshall Hodgson, a distinguished historian of Islam at the University of Chicago, was, I think, the first to draw attention to this problem, and he invented the word "Islamdom." Unfortunately, "Islamdom" is awkward to pronounce and just didn't catch on, so the confusion remains. (In Turkish there is no confusion, because "Islam" means the civilization, and "Islamiyet" refers specifically to the religion.)

In looking at the history of civilization we talk, for example, of "Islamic art," meaning art produced in Muslim countries, not just religious art, whereas the term "Christian art" refers to religious or votive art, churches and pious sculpture and painting. We talk about "Islamic science," by which we mean physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, and the rest under the aegis of Muslim civilization. If we say "Christian science," we mean something totally different and unrelated.

Does one talk about "Jewish science"? I don't think so. One may talk about Jewish scientists, but that's not the same thing. But then, of course, Judaism is not a civilization—it's a religion and a culture. Most of Jewish history since the Diaspora has taken place within either Christendom or Islam. There were Jews in India, there were Jews in China, but those communities didn't flourish. Their role was minimal, both in the history of the Jews and in the history of India and China. The term "Judeo-Christian" is a new name for an old reality, though in earlier

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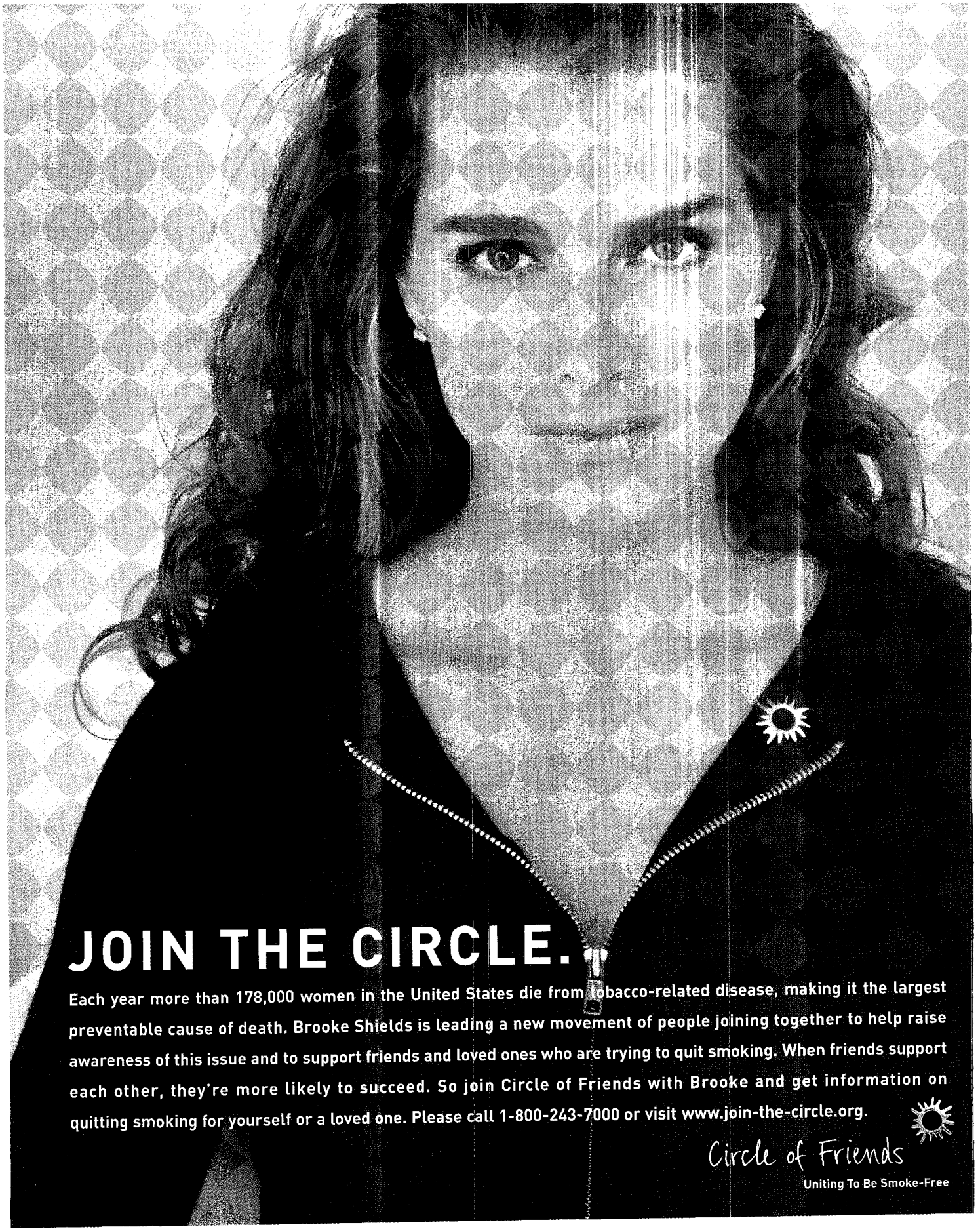

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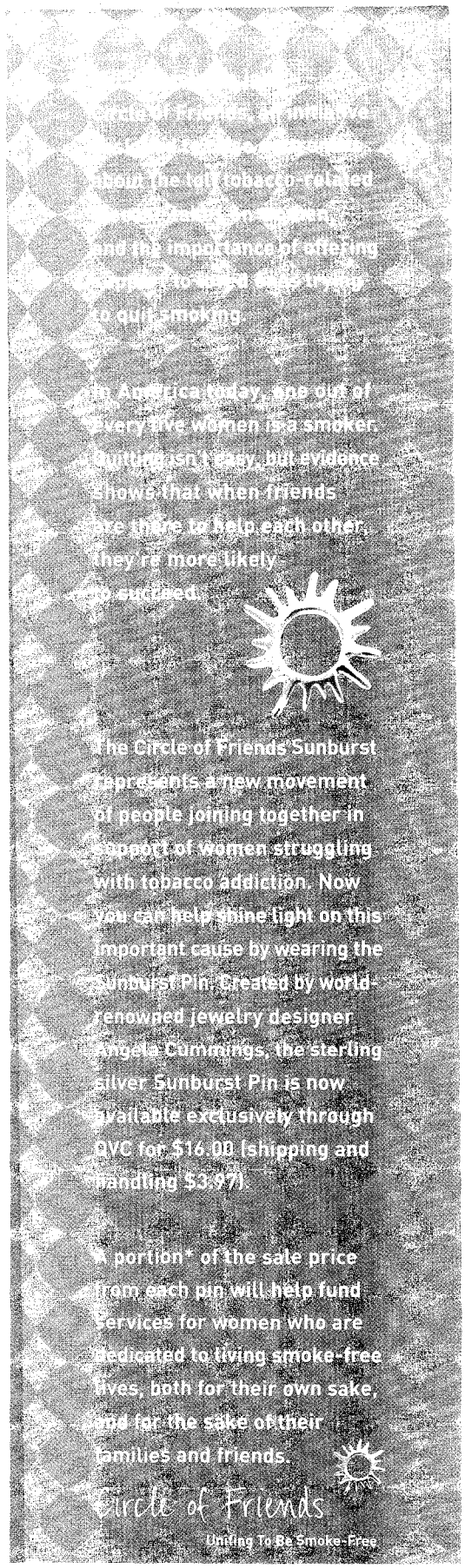
times it would have been equally resented on both sides of the hyphen. One could use an equivalent term, "Judeo-Islamic," to designate another cultural symbiosis that flourished in the more recent past and ended with the dawn of modernity.

To what extent is a religiously defined civilization compatible with pluralism—tolerance of others within the same civilization but of different religions? This crucial question points to a major distinction between two types of religion. For some religions, just as "civilization" means us, and the rest are barbarians, so "religion" means ours, and the rest are infidels. Other religions, such as Judaism and most of the religions of Asia, concede that human beings may use different religions to speak to God, as they use different languages to speak to one another. God understands them all. I know in my heart that the English language is the finest instrument the human race has ever devised to express its thoughts and feelings, but I recognize in my mind that others may feel exactly the same way about their languages, and I have no problem with that. These two approaches to religion may conveniently be denoted by the terms their critics use to condemn them—"triumphalism" and "relativism." In one of his sermons the fifteenth-century Franciscan Saint John of Capistrano, immortalized on the map of California, denounced the Jews for trying to spread a "deceitful" notion among Christians: "The Jews say that everyone can be saved in his own faith, which is impossible." For once a charge of his against the Jews was justified. The Talmud does indeed say that the righteous of all faiths have a place in paradise. Polytheists and atheists are excluded, but monotheists of any persuasion who observe the basic moral laws are eligible. The relativist view was condemned and rejected by both Christians and Muslims, who shared the conviction that there was only one true faith, theirs, which it was their duty to bring to all humankind. The triumphalist view is increasingly under attack in Christendom, and is disavowed by significant numbers of Christian clerics. There is little sign as yet of a parallel development in Islam.

Tolerance is, of course, an extremely intolerant idea, because it means "I am the boss: I will allow you some, though not all, of the rights I enjoy as long as you behave yourself according to standards that I shall determine." That, I think, is a fair definition of religious tolerance as it is normally understood and applied. In a letter to the Jewish community of Newport, Rhode Island, that George Washington wrote in 1790, he remarked, perhaps in an allusion to the famous "Patent of Tolerance" promulgated by the Austrian Emperor Joseph II a few years previously, "It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights." At a meeting of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Vienna some years ago the Cardinal Archbishop Franz Koenig spoke of tolerance, and I couldn't resist quoting Washington to him. He replied, "You are right. I shall no more speak of tolerance; I shall speak of mutual respect." There are still too few who share the attitude expressed in this truly magnificent response.

For those taking the relativist approach to religion (in effect, "I have my god, you have your god, and others have theirs"), there may be specific political or economic reasons for objecting to someone else's beliefs, but in principle there is no theological problem. For those taking the triumphalist approach (classically summed up in the formula "I'm right, you're wrong, go to hell"), tolerance is a problem. Because the triumphalist's is the only true and complete religion, all other religions are at best incomplete and more probably false and evil; and since



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he is the privileged recipient of God's final message to humankind, it is surely his duty to bring it to others rather than keep it selfishly for himself.

Now, if one believes that, what does one do about it? And how does one relate to people of another religion? If we look at this question historically, one thing emerges very clearly: whether the other religion is previous or subsequent to one's own is extremely important. From a Christian point of view, for example, Judaism is previous and Islam is subsequent. From a Muslim point of view, both Judaism and Christianity are previous. From a Jewish point of view, both Christianity and Islam are subsequent—but since Judaism is not triumphalist, this is not a problem.

But it is a problem for Christians and Muslims—or perhaps I should say for traditional Christians and Muslims. From their perspective, a previous religion may be regarded as incomplete, as superseded, but it is not necessarily false if it comes in the proper sequence of revelation. So from a Muslim point of view, Judaism and Christianity were both true religions at the time of their revelation, but they were superseded by the final and complete revelation of Islam; although they are out-of-date—last year's model, so to speak—they are not inherently false. Therefore Muslim law, sharia, not only permits but requires that a certain degree of tolerance be accorded them.

It is, of course, a little more complicated: Jews and Christians are accused of falsifying their originally authentic scriptures and religions. Thus, from a Muslim point of view, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and of the divinity of Jesus Christ are distortions. The point is made in several Koranic verses: "There is no God but God alone, He has no companion," and "He is God, one, eternal. He does not beget, He is not begotten, and He has no peer." These and similar verses appear frequently on early Islamic coins and in inscriptions, and are clearly polemical in intent. They are inscribed, notably, in the Dome of the Rock, in Jerusalem—a challenge to Christianity in its birthplace. Jews are accused of eliminating scriptural passages foretelling the advent of Muhammad. Anything subsequent to Muhammad, "the Seal of the Prophets," is, from the Muslim perspective, necessarily false. This explains the harsh treatment of post-Islamic religions, such as the Bahai faith and the Ahmadiya movement, in Islamic lands.

Muslims did not claim a special relationship to either of the predecessor religions, and if Jews and Christians chose not to accept Muhammad, that was their loss. Muslims were prepared to tolerate them in accordance with sharia, which lays down both the extent and the limits of the latitude to be granted those who follow a recognized religion: they must be monotheists and they must have a revealed scripture, which in practice often limited tolerance to Jews and Christians. The Koran names a third qualified group, the Sabians; there is some uncertainty as to who they were, and at times this uncertainty provided a convenient way of extending the tolerance of the Muslim state to Zoroastrians or other groups when it was thought expedient. On principle, no tolerance was extended to polytheists or idolaters, and this sometimes raised acute problems in Asian and African lands conquered by the Muslims.

Tolerance was a much more difficult question for Christians. For them, Judaism is a precursor of their religion, and Christianity is the fulfillment of the divine promises made to the Jews. The Jewish rejection of that fulfillment is therefore seen as impugning some of the central tenets of the Christian faith. Tolerance between different branches of Christianity would eventually become an even bigger problem. Of course, the outsider is more easily tolerated than the dissident insider. Heretics are a much greater danger than unbelievers. The English philosopher John Locke's

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famous *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, written toward the end of the seventeenth century, is a plea for religious tolerance, still a fairly new idea at that time. Locke wrote, "Neither pagan, nor Mahometan, nor Jew, ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth, because of his religion." Someone is of course missing from that list: the Catholic. The difference is clear. For Locke and his contemporaries, the pagan, the Muslim, the Jew, were no threat to the Church of England; the Catholic was. The Catholic was trying to subvert Protestantism, to make England Catholic, and, as Protestant polemicists at the time put it, to make England subject to a foreign potentate—namely, the Pope in Rome.

Muslims were in general more tolerant of diversity within their own community, and even cited an early tradition to the effect that such diversity is a divine blessing. The concept of heresy—in the Christian sense of incorrect belief recognized and condemned as such by properly constituted religious authority—was unknown to classical Islam. Deviation and diversity, with rare exceptions, were persecuted only when they offered a serious threat to the existing order. The very notion of an authority empowered to rule on questions of belief was alien to traditional Islamic thought and practice. It has become less alien.

A consequence of the similarity between Christianity and Islam in background and approach is the long conflict between the two civilizations they defined. When two religions met in the Mediterranean area, each claiming to be the recipient of God's final revelation, conflict was inevitable. The conflict, in fact, was almost continuous: the first Arab-Islamic invasions took Islam by conquest to the then Christian lands of Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa, and, for a while, to Southern Europe; the Tatars took it into Russia and Eastern Europe; and the Turks took it into the Balkans. To each advance came a Christian rejoinder: the Reconquista in Spain, the Crusades in the Levant, the throwing off of what the Russians call the Tatar yoke in the history of their country, and, finally, the great European counterattack into the lands of Islam, which is usually called imperialism.

During this long period of conflict, of *jihad* and crusade, of conquest and reconquest, Christianity and Islam nevertheless maintained a level of communication, because the two are basically the same kind of religion. They could argue. They could hold disputations and debates. Even their screams of rage were mutually intelligible. When Christians and Muslims said to each other, "You are an infidel and you will burn in hell," each understood exactly what the other meant, because they both meant the same thing. (Their heavens are differently appointed, but their hells are much the same.) Such assertions and accusations would have conveyed little or no meaning to a Hindu, a Buddhist, or a Confucian.

Christians and Muslims looked at each other and studied each other in strikingly different ways. This is owing in part, at least, to their different circumstances. Christian Europeans from the start had to learn foreign languages in order to read their scriptures and their classics and to communicate with one another. From the seventh century onward they had a further motive to look outward—their holy places, in the land where their faith was born, were under Muslim rule, and could be visited only with Muslim permission. Muslims had no comparable problems. Their holy places were in Arabia, under Arab rule; their scriptures were in Arabic, which across their civilization was the language also of literature, of science and scholarship, of government and commerce, and, increasingly, of everyday communication, as the conquered countries in Southwest Asia and North Africa were Arabized and forgot their ancient languages and scripts. In

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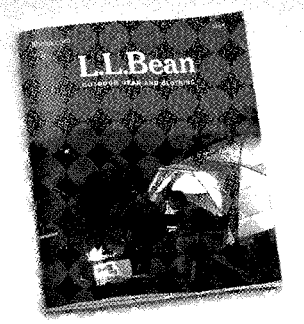

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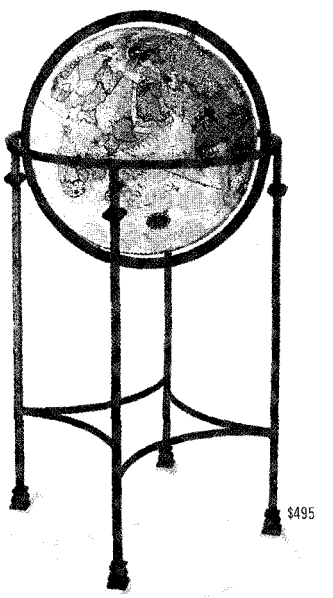

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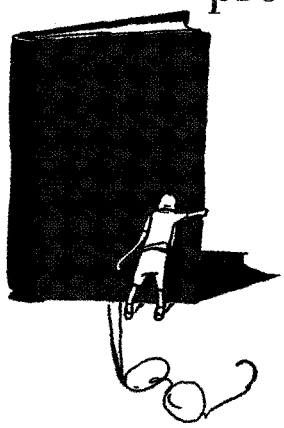

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later times other Islamic languages emerged, notably Persian and Turkish; but in the early, formative centuries Arabic reigned alone.

This difference in the experiences and the needs of the two civilizations is reflected in their attitudes toward each other. From the earliest recorded times people in Europe tried to learn the languages of the Islamic world, starting with Arabic, the language of the most advanced civilization of the day. Later some, mostly for practical reasons, learned Persian and more especially Turkish, which in Ottoman times supplanted Arabic as the language of government and diplomacy. From the sixteenth century on there were chairs of Arabic at French and Dutch universities. Cambridge University had its first chair of Arabic in 1632, Oxford in 1636. Europeans no longer needed Arabic to gain access to the higher sciences. Now they learned it out of intellectual curiosity—the desire to know something about another civilization and its ways. By the eighteenth century Europe boasted a considerable body of scholarly literature regarding the Islamic world—editions of texts and translations of historical and literary and theological works, as well as histories of literature and religion and even general histories of Islamic countries, with descriptions of their people and their ways. Grammars and dictionaries of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish were available to European scholars from the sixteenth century onward. It is surely significant that far more attention was given to Arabic, the classical and scriptural language of Islam, than to Persian and Turkish, the languages of the current rulers of the world. In the course of the nineteenth century European and later also American scholars set to work to disinter, decipher, and interpret the buried and forgotten languages and writings of antiquity, and thus to recover an ancient and glorious chapter in history. These activities were greeted with incomprehension and then with suspicion by those who did not share and therefore could not understand this kind of curiosity.

The Islamic world, with no comparable incentives, displayed a total lack of interest in Christian civilization. An initially understandable, even justifiable, contempt for the barbarians beyond the frontier continued long after that characterization ceased to be accurate, and even into a time when it became preposterously inaccurate.

It has sometimes been argued that the European interest in Arabic and other Eastern languages was an adjunct—or, given the time lag, a precursor—of imperialism. If that is so, we must acquit the Arabs and the Turks of any such predatory intent. The Arabs spent 800 years in Spain without showing much interest in Spanish or Latin. The Ottomans ruled much of southeastern Europe for half a millennium, but for most of that time they never bothered to learn Greek or any Balkan or European language—which might have been useful. When they needed interpreters, they used converts and others from these various countries. There was no Occidentalism until the expanding West forced itself on the attention of the rest of the world. We may find similar attitudes in present-day America.

Today we in the West are engaged in what we see as a war against terrorism, and what the terrorists present as a war against unbelief. Some on both sides see this struggle as one between civilizations or, as others would put it, between religions. If they are right, and there is much to support their view, then the clash between these two religiously defined civilizations results not only from their differences but also from their resemblances—and in these there may even be some hope for better future understanding.

Bernard Lewis is the Cleveland E. Dodge Professor of Near Eastern Studies, Emeritus, at Princeton University. He is the author of many books on Islam, including The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror *(2003). His most recent* Atlantic *article was* "What Went Wrong?" *(January 2002).*

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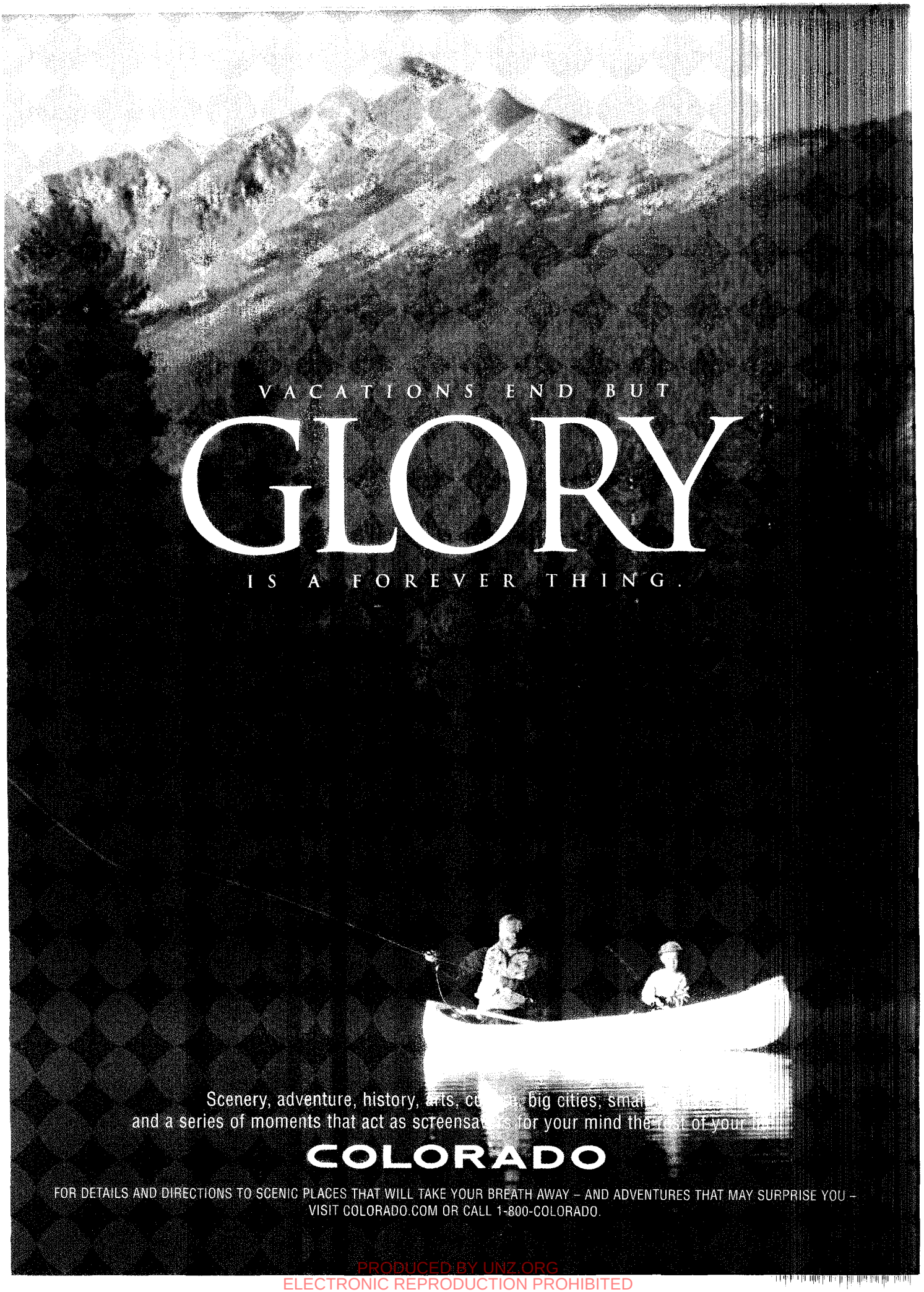

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EUPHORIAS OF HATRED

The grim lessons of a novel by Gogol

SOCIETY

ROBERT D. KAPLAN

The ancient Greeks, it has been said, were too reasonable to ignore the intoxicating power of the unreasonable. They worshiped Dionysus, the god of excess and ecstasy, and they admired tragedy—an art form that shows that human feelings are far too intense and varied to be contained by the narrow strictures of rational self-interest. Explosions of passion—romantic and destructive, cruel and self-sacrificing, among nations as among individuals—not only are to be expected but are central to the human spirit. Tragedy, as the classicist Edith Hamilton once observed, is the beauty of intolerable truths.

The signal error of the American elite after the end of the Cold War was its trust in rationalism, which, it was assumed, would eventually propel the world's societies toward systems based on individual rights and united by American-style capitalism and technology. Recent explanations for terrorism have themselves been excessively rational. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks on the United States many commentators and academics asserted that terrorism stemmed from poverty. Then, looking more closely, they said it stemmed from rising expectations and the perception of inequalities. True enough: economic development often leads to upheaval and insurrection, as migration to cities and the rise of the middle class unleash all manner of ambitions and yearnings. But even if poverty and perceived inequality were to vanish, and the rough places in the road of development were smoothed, depravity and outrage would continue. The more advanced a civilization, the more cerebral and subtly conformist it is likely to be—and, consequently, the more extreme the pent-up frustration and the more spectacular the violence it fuels.

If realism is to be truly realistic, it must acknowledge human beings' romantic and heroic impulses, in all their healthy and perverse forms. Few writers do this as economically as Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol did in *Taras Bulba*. This short novel is a story of the Dnieper Cossacks. It takes place in a hazy past, sometime from the fifteenth to the early seventeenth century, when the Ukrainians struggled for independence from Poland even as a threat persisted from the Turks. It is a work that the critic John Cournos called "the finest epic in Russian history" and likened to the *Odyssey*. The novel has a Kiplingesque gusto, too, that makes it a pleasure to read, but central to its theme is an unredemptive, darkly evil violence that is far beyond anything Kipling ever touched on. We need more works like *Taras Bulba*, to better understand the emotional wellsprings of the threat we face today in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Gogol gave his best years to the story; he finished the initial version in 1835 and the final version a decade later. According to David Magarshack, one of Gogol's translators, *Taras Bulba*, with its romantic evocation of galloping Cossacks, created the myth of the "Russian soul." But Gogol was no dreamy idealist: in *Taras Bulba* he wrote of a "savage age when man's whole life seemed to be steeped in violence and blood and his heart was so hardened that he felt no pity."

Gogol was a Russian nationalist, but to him the real, primordial Russia was in Ukraine (a word meaning "borderland"), whose unremitting and unimpeded steppe—lacking natural boundaries and graced with few navigable rivers—had made its colliding peoples warlike. Although Gogol used the words "Russian," "Ukrainian," and "Cossack" to denote specific identities, he also recognized that these identities greatly overlapped (as identities in the region still do). His account anticipates the conflicts, the confusions, and the nuances of our own era. It remains unclear, for instance, whether Ukraine will survive as an independent country or will at some point be drawn into a resurgent Russian empire.

In Gogol's account, the absence of natural boundaries leaves the Ukrainian steppe open to invaders from all sides. It also makes political frontiers even more artificial than usual. Compare Central Asia today: a quarrelsome tableland of calcified regimes and nationalities inside false borders. Ethnic Tajiks dominate the great cities of Uzbekistan. Ethnic Uzbeks make up a quarter of the population of Tajikistan. The great divisions in *Taras Bulba* are those of civilizations: the Eastern Orthodox Dnieper Cossacks are pitted against the Catholic Poles and the Muslim Turks and Tatars. This is a world so coarse, and so unreceptive to enlightenment, that freedom means only the freedom to express oneself through a stultifying yet energizing group identity—a sad commonplace in many parts of the world today, where dictatorships are crumbling but democracy is weak or nonexistent. In such places a fury burns that is beyond the cultivated bourgeois imagination. Gogol communicated this fury brilliantly.

Taras Bulba, a Dnieper Cossack, is an old regular-army colonel. He is a man, in Gogol's words, "created for the alarms of war ... distinguished by the coarse directness of his character." Taras abuses his wife, who he fears will soften the character of his two sons. His worst nightmare is that his sons will never experience violence; he doesn't care if they die young and horribly, so long as they prove themselves capable of cruelty against an enemy.

Gogol explained that a fearsome character like Taras could be forged only out of the chaos that had engulfed southern Russia, "abandoned by its princes and laid waste and burnt to ashes by the ruthless Mongol freebooters." A treeless landscape of charred villages stretched for hundreds of miles. Deprived of security—indeed, of any real government—and surrounded by predatory neighbors, men became cruel

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and fearless. In response the Cossack brotherhoods emerged, with their glorification of "comradeship." Private life and material comfort came to be considered shameful. Russian communism may be best understood less as an import from Central European intellectuals than as a reflection of Russia's long-standing psychological tendencies. (According to the Russian intellectual Nicolas Berdyaev, Bolshevism was the Eastern Orthodox form of Marxism, a faith imbued with the idea of "totality.")

For the Dnieper Cossacks in *Taras Bulba*, violence is a way of life, an expression of joy and belief, unlinked to any strategic or tactical necessity. Warfare in the novel is nearly continuous. As one Cossack declares, "I need hardly tell you that a young man cannot exist without war." In such a world the notion of a rational "balance of power" with the Catholic Poles or the Islamic Tatars is not a pragmatic goal but a corrupting and effeminate conceit. Those outside the marrow of Orthodoxy exist only to be annihilated, or to be converted en masse to the faith.

The rare breaks in the fighting are given over to "spellbinding," prolonged drunken orgies. "The inns in the suburb were smashed," Gogol wrote, "and the Cossacks helped themselves to mead, vodka and beer without payment, the innkeepers being too glad to escape with their lives." Hearing stories of Catholic victories to the west, and of Jewish collusion in those victories, the Cossacks take murderous revenge on local Jews, whom they toss into the river.

Gogol's Cossacks represent the ultimate mob, fueled by the crude belief systems and symbolism that sustain what the national-security analyst Ralph Peters has called "euphorias of hatred." Peters notes that although individual people are equally capable of love and hatred, crowds are incomparably better at hatred: individuals within a crowd are able to take part in cathartic violence without having to accept responsibility for it. The crowd that cheered in Ramallah in October of 2000, as two Israeli soldiers were tortured and defenestrated, is a classic example of this.

Elias Canetti, the Bulgarian-born Nobel laureate who devoted a career to the study of crowds, has written, "The crowd needs a direction ... Its constant fear of disintegration means that it will accept *any* goal." There's no reasoning with a crowd, in other words; against the absolute faith of a Cossack horde, for example, the urban civilization of the Poles is nothing. This kind of faith, Gogol wrote, is "as firm and as terrible as the rock, unwrought by the hand of man."

The raw, even delusional, passion at the heart of such faith has played a frightful role in human affairs. One need look no further than the devastation brought about in twentieth-century Europe by what Canetti labels human "packs" to understand the destructive power that this passion can unleash. And yet, ironically, meeting the challenge of these human packs—indeed, even surviving as a society—requires a willingness to tap into the same dangerously elemental passion. Channeled effectively, it can also become the source of liberal patriotism, heroism, and romance.

Such passion remains robust in the United States—a firm conclusion one can draw from our post-9/11 stocktaking. Foreigners often find Americans as a group more than a little hard to take, in their overt nationalism, deep religiosity, proud vulgarity, unashamed sentimentality, battered but defiant idealism, and propensity for searing public debate. These are precisely the qualities that are disappearing in Europe. Traumatized by world war and absolutist political ideologies, Western Europe's political elites have been working for decades to neutralize passion altogether. Europe's intellectuals and politicians have become increasingly effete, bureaucratic, and defeatist; their foreign policies, to the extent that they even exist, amount to a form of regulatory compromise, guaranteed to pursue the path of least resistance. Europe, if it seeks to avoid decline, will have to relearn the lesson of Gogol and the ancient Greeks: that rational argument alone will never fully overcome those who simply and passionately believe.

Robert D. Kaplan is a correspondent for The Atlantic. *His most recent book is* Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos *(2002).*

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PRIMARY SOURCES

Selections from reports, studies, and other documents. This month: al Qaeda on the Internet; developing a "Star Trek 'phaser'"; New York's infuriating talking taxis; our states' regressive tax systems

THE NATION

Who Pays?

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, a nonpartisan research group based in Washington, D.C., has just published a report, written by the estimable Robert McIntyre (a liberal tax analyst whose numbers are among the most credible in the field) and six co-authors, that provides detailed statistics about tax burdens and tax trends in each state. It also ranks states according to their relative tax progressivity (Washington, Florida, Tennessee, Texas, and South Dakota have the most regressive state tax systems; Delaware, Montana, Vermont, and California have the most progressive) and draws some broad conclusions about tax distribution nationwide. The report's central finding is that most state tax systems are regressive: on average, middle-income families pay more than twice as much of their income in state and local taxes as rich families do—and poor families pay a relatively greater share than even middle-income families. And these taxes have become more regressive over the past decade and a half. While taxes on the rich have fallen as a percentage of income since 1989, taxes on the middle class and the poor have risen. (A crucial determinant of how heavily a state's tax burden falls on its poorest citizens is how much the state relies on sales or excise taxes to generate revenue; poor families pay more than six times as much of their income in consumption taxes as rich families do.) As states mull over how to make up huge fiscal shortfalls in 2003 and 2004, this report is essential reading.

—"Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All 50 States"
Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy

The American Way of War

Death rays and laser guns have been staples of science fiction for at least a century. Now, according to a comprehensive new report from the Lexington Institute, a conservative public-interest group, the U.S. military is on the verge of deploying such weapons in combat. "Directed-energy weapons"—that is, high-energy lasers and high-power microwaves—may change the very nature of warfare more significantly than anything since the invention of gunpowder. Some of the obvious advantages of these new weapons include their ability to travel at the speed of light, greatly reducing "the target's capacity to evade harm"; their extreme precision (an Airborne Laser can hit a target the size of a Mini Cooper from 300 miles away with "pinpoint" accuracy); their ability to fire repeatedly without reloading (conventional weapons can fire only as many rounds as their operators can carry); and the fact that they can not only strike targets but "acquire" them, by means of detecting, imaging, tracking, and illuminating devices that are built into the weapons themselves. (Of course, there are some vexing disadvantages, as well: for instance, dust or inclement weather can disrupt the functioning of lasers.) According to the U.S. Air Force, "Active Denial Technology" can project microwaves a sixty-fourth of an inch into an enemy's skin, producing acute pain without doing any physical damage. "The ultimate goal," the Lexington Institute says, "is to find the equivalent of the Star Trek 'phaser' that could be set on stun."

—"Directed-Energy Weapons: Technologies, Applications and Implications"
The Lexington Institute

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Osama Online

"We can say with some certainty, al Qaeda loves the Internet." So begins a recent paper by Lieutenant Colonel Timothy L. Thomas, an analyst in the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, that describes some of the myriad uses al Qaeda has made of the Internet. For instance, the evidence strongly suggests that Mohammed Atta and company used coded e-mails to plan the 9/11 attacks. (Reportedly, Atta's final e-mail was "The semester begins in three more weeks. We've obtained 19 confirmations for studies in the faculty of law, the faculty of urban planning, the faculty of fine arts, and the faculty of engineering.") Terrorist operatives also relay hidden messages to one another by changing the color of icons on certain Web sites, or by changing the direction in which AK-47 icons are facing on others. Al Qaeda has even used Internet chat rooms as command-and-control mechanisms, and has used Web sites to publish the names and home telephone numbers of al Qaeda fighters captured in Pakistan, "presumably," Thomas writes, "to allow sympathizers to contact [terrorists'] families and let them know they were alive." Perhaps the most disconcerting observation Thomas makes, however, is that terrorists consciously manipulate the level of Internet and telecommunications "chatter"—which is what the Department of Homeland Security uses to raise and lower warning levels—to figure out where the leaks are in their communications network. "For example, if terrorists use encrypted messages over cell phones to discuss a fake operation against, say, the Golden Gate Bridge, they can then sit back and watch to see if law enforcement agencies issue warnings regarding that particular landmark. If they do, then the terrorists know their communications are being listened to by US officials."

—"Al Qaeda and the Internet: The Danger of 'CyberPlanning'"
Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly, Spring 2003

The Wellington Effect

Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, on June 18, 1815, was not, as the Duke of Wellington claimed, "the nearest run thing." In fact, Napoleon had only an 18 percent chance of winning that day. Two German political scientists, Ralph Rotte and Christoph Schmidt, looked at 625 battles from 1600 to 1973 to deter-

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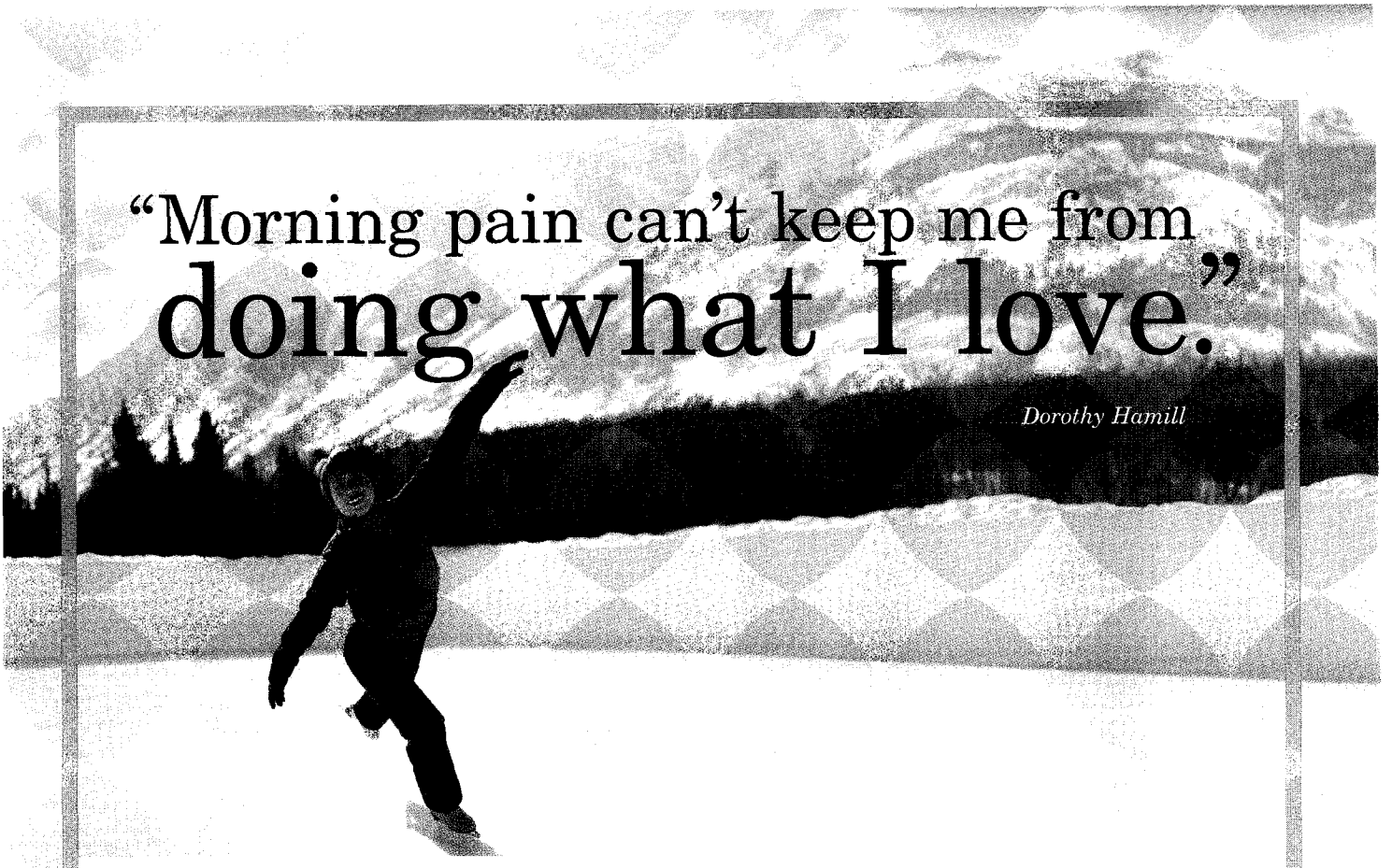

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT VIOXX.

People with allergic reactions, such as asthma, to aspirin or other arthritis medicines should not take VIOXX. In rare cases, serious stomach problems, such as bleeding, can occur without warning.

Tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney disease, or a history of angina, heart attack, or a blocked artery in your heart. VIOXX cannot take the place of aspirin for the prevention of heart attack or stroke. VIOXX should not be used by women in late pregnancy.

VIOXX has been extensively studied in large clinical trials. Commonly reported side effects included upper respiratory infection, diarrhea, nausea, and high blood pressure. Report any unusual symptoms to your doctor.

Please see the Patient Product Information for VIOXX on the next page for additional information that should be discussed with your doctor.

ONCE DAILY

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Patient Information about
VIOXX® (rofecoxib tablets and oral suspension)
VIOXX® (pronounced "VI-ox")
for Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis and Pain
Generic name: rofecoxib ("ro-fa-COX-ib")

9183907

You should read this information before you start taking VIOXX*. Also, read the leaflet each time you refill your prescription, in case any information has changed. This leaflet provides only a summary of certain information about VIOXX. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you an additional leaflet that is written for health professionals that contains more complete information. This leaflet does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss VIOXX when you start taking your medicine and at regular checkups.

What is VIOXX?

VIOXX is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that is used to reduce pain and inflammation (swelling and soreness). VIOXX is available as a tablet or a liquid that you take by mouth.

VIOXX is a medicine for:
- relief of osteoarthritis (the arthritis caused by age-related "wear and tear" on bones and joints)
- relief of rheumatoid arthritis in adults
- management of acute pain in adults (like the short-term pain you can get after a dental or surgical operation)
- treatment of menstrual pain (pain during women's monthly periods).

Who should not take VIOXX?

Do not take VIOXX if you:
- have had an allergic reaction such as asthma attacks, hives, or swelling of the throat and face to aspirin or other NSAIDs (for example, ibuprofen and naproxen).
- have had an allergic reaction to rofecoxib, which is the active ingredient of VIOXX, or to any of its inactive ingredients. (See Inactive Ingredients at the end of this leaflet.)

What should I tell my doctor before and during treatment with VIOXX?

Tell your doctor if you are:
- pregnant or plan to become pregnant. VIOXX should not be used in late pregnancy because it may harm the fetus.
- breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed. It is not known whether VIOXX is passed through to human breast milk and what its effects could be on a nursing child.

Tell your doctor if you have:
- history of angina, heart attack or a blocked artery in your heart
- kidney disease
- liver disease
- heart failure
- high blood pressure
- had an allergic reaction to aspirin or other NSAIDs
- had a serious stomach problem in the past.

Tell your doctor about:
- any other medical problems or allergies you have now or have had.
- all medicines that you are taking or plan to take, even those you can get without a prescription.

Tell your doctor if you develop:
- serious stomach problems such as ulcer or bleeding symptoms (for instance, stomach burning or black stools, which are signs of possible stomach bleeding).
- unexplained weight gain or swelling of the feet and/or legs.
- skin rash or allergic reactions. If you have a severe allergic reaction, get medical help right away.

How should I take VIOXX?

VIOXX should be taken once a day. Your doctor will decide what dose of VIOXX you should take and how long you should take it. You may take VIOXX with or without food.

Can I take VIOXX with other medicines?

Tell your doctor about all of the other medicines you are taking or plan to take while you are on VIOXX, even other medicines that you can get without a prescription. Your doctor may want to check that your medicines are working properly together if you are taking other medicines such as:
- warfarin (a blood thinner)
- theophylline (a medicine used to treat asthma)
- rifampin (an antibiotic)
- ACE inhibitors (medicines used for high blood pressure and heart failure)
- lithium (a medicine used to treat a certain type of depression).

VIOXX cannot take the place of aspirin for prevention of heart attack or stroke. If you are currently taking aspirin for this purpose, you should not discontinue taking aspirin without consulting your doctor.

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What are the possible side effects of VIOXX?

Serious but rare side effects that have been reported in patients taking VIOXX and/or related medicines have included:

- Serious stomach problems, such as stomach and intestinal bleeding, can occur with or without warning symptoms. These problems, if severe, could lead to hospitalization or death. Although this happens rarely, you should watch for signs that you may have this serious side effect and tell your doctor right away.
- Heart attacks and similar serious events have been reported in patients taking VIOXX.
- Serious allergic reactions including swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat which may cause difficulty breathing or swallowing and wheezing occur rarely but may require treatment right away. Severe skin reactions have also been reported.
- Serious kidney problems occur rarely, including acute kidney failure and worsening of chronic kidney failure.
- Severe liver problems, including hepatitis, jaundice and liver failure, occur rarely in patients taking NSAIDs, including VIOXX. Tell your doctor if you develop symptoms of liver problems. These include nausea, tiredness, itching, tenderness in the right upper abdomen, and flu-like symptoms.

In addition, the following side effects have been reported: anxiety, blurred vision, colitis, confusion, decreased levels of sodium in the blood, depression, fluid in the lungs, hair loss, hallucinations, increased levels of potassium in the blood, insomnia, low blood cell counts, menstrual disorder, palpitations, pancreatitis, severe increase in blood pressure, tingling sensation, unusual headache with stiff neck (aseptic meningitis), vertigo.

More common, but less serious side effects reported with VIOXX have included the following:

Upper and/or lower respiratory infection and/or inflammation
Headache
Dizziness
Diarrhea
Nausea and/or vomiting
Heartburn, stomach pain and upset
Swelling of the legs and/or feet
High blood pressure
Back pain
Tiredness
Urinary tract infection.

These side effects were reported in at least 2% of osteoarthritis patients receiving daily doses of VIOXX 12.5 mg to 25 mg in clinical studies.

The side effects described above do not include all of the side effects reported with VIOXX. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about side effects. Your doctor or pharmacist can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects. Any time you have a medical problem you think may be related to VIOXX, talk to your doctor.

What else can I do to help manage my arthritis pain?

Talk to your doctor about:
- Exercise
- Controlling your weight
- Hot and cold treatments
- Using support devices.

What else should I know about VIOXX?

This leaflet provides a summary of certain information about VIOXX. If you have any questions or concerns about VIOXX, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or pain, talk to your health professional. Your pharmacist can give you an additional leaflet that is written for health professionals.

Do not share VIOXX with anyone else; it was prescribed only for you. It should be taken only for the condition for which it was prescribed.

Keep VIOXX and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Inactive Ingredients:

Oral suspension: citric acid (monohydrate), sodium citrate (dihydrate), sorbitol solution, strawberry flavor, xanthan gum, sodium methylparaben, sodium propylparaben.

Tablets: croscarmellose sodium, hydroxypropyl cellulose, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, and yellow ferric oxide.

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mine how much influence each of several key factors has on the outcome of military engagements. Having the advantage of surprise, for instance, turns out to be a strong determinant of "battle success," adding 15 percentage points to the likelihood of victory. And whereas superior training doesn't appear to give much of a competitive edge, superior intelligence does: it has a marginal impact of 25 percent on the likelihood of victory. (The conclusions are derived from statistical modeling.) But Rotte and Schmidt's central finding is that although there are individual exceptions (for instance, breech-loading rifles helped Prussia to defeat Austria at the Battle of Koniggratz, in 1866), technology has generally not affected battle outcomes: surprise, morale, logistics, and intelligence are all far more important. (Military planners in the Pentagon and elsewhere take note: this suggests that much of the literature on modern warfare, with its emphasis on the technological aspects of war, is misguided.) So what *is* the most important factor in determining victory in battle? Leadership: its marginal effect is nearly 50 percent. Which means that the Duke of Wellington was being modest. Had he not commanded the British forces that day, Napoleon, the authors calculate, would have had a 79 percent chance of winning at Waterloo.

—"On the Production of Victory: Empirical Determinants of Battlefield Success in Modern War"
The Institute for the Study of Labor

SOCIETY

Go to Hell, Elmo

For several years now taxi riders in New York City have been subjected to disembodied celebrity voices (ranging from Eartha Kitt's to Elmo's, from Joe Torre's to Mr. Moviefone's) exhorting them to fasten their seat belts, collect their receipts from cabdrivers, and retrieve their personal belongings before leaving a cab. Have these exhortations had any effect? Not the desired one, apparently. According to a survey conducted by the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, whereas only 21 percent of cab riders said the Talking Taxi messages had increased their seat-belt usage, and 67 percent said the messages had had no effect at all, 12 percent said it had caused them to *decrease* their seat-belt usage. (That passengers would seek to spite Elmo by consciously disregarding his reminders was surely not a calculation in the program's planning.) More than 80 percent of respondents said that Talking Taxi had no impact on whether they asked for their receipts, and more than 60 percent said it had not helped them remember to take their personal property. (Taxi and Limousine Commission data corroborate this: lost-property statistics are the same as they were before the celebrity-voices program was implemented.) Although a solid majority of respondents also said they simply didn't like the program, Matthew Daus, the Taxi and Limousine commissioner, is at pains to emphasize that his commission was not concerned with whether the Talking Taxi was popular, only with whether it worked. It doesn't.

—"Celebrity Talking Taxi Survey"
New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission

The Case Against Pro Sports

It's a familiar phenomenon. A governor or a mayor, eager to draw development dollars and national attention to his region, announces a plan to bring a professional sports franchise to town. But there's a catch: to lure the team, the region will have to build a world-class stadium, financed primarily with local taxpayers' money. Why should the stadium be built with public money? Because, the politician says, brandishing a blue-chip consultant's "economic impact analysis," the investment will produce a net economic gain for the region. That's wrong, say the stadium's opponents, brandishing an economist's study: publicly financed stadiums represent a net economic loss for the region. So who's right—the consultant or the economist? Alas, the economist: almost every scholarly study on the subject has concluded that sports stadiums are not a good financial investment for a region. Why do politicians (and their consultants) persist in touting them? Because advocates base their positions on a calculus that is not merely financial. There are indirect economic effects (both positive and negative) and, more important, non-economic effects that are harder to measure as part of a simple cost-benefit analysis. Tim Chapin, an assistant professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Florida State University, provides a brisk yet comprehensive summary of all the latest research on the impact that sports facilities have on their surrounding regions. It's worthwhile reading for anyone interested in local politics or urban planning, but sports fans will lament its conclusions. Not only has the economic literature definitively established that it is impossible to argue for a stadium purely on the basis of its direct economic benefits (the official death of the pro-facility economic argument can be dated to the Brookings Institution's publication, in 1997, of the book *Sports, Jobs & Taxes: The Economic Impact of Sports Teams and Stadiums*), but it has yet to be established that the other benefits (such as the psychological or image advantages to a community of "living in a big league town," the political and civic benefits that derive from large communal efforts, or the development effects catalyzed by new activity near the stadium) outweigh the economic costs.

—"Identifying the Real Costs and Benefits of Sports Facilities"
Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/2003/05/primarysources.htm

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THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

U.S. MILITARY LOGISTICS

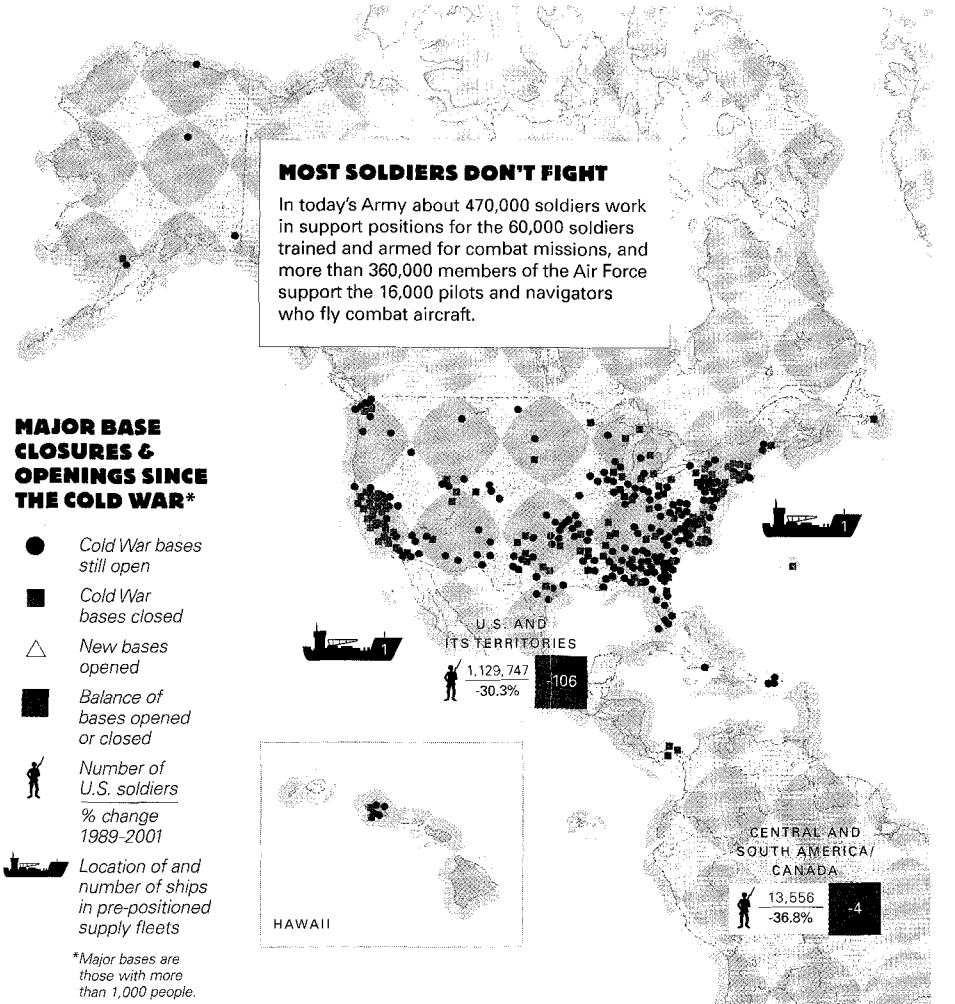
The biggest challenge for the U.S. armed forces today may be not the act of fighting war but the feeding, housing, arming, transporting, and fueling of their far-flung units

Although combat units are the most conspicuous part of America's conventional military, they make up a comparatively small portion of the total force. As the chart on the lower right shows, the "teeth" of the war machine depend on a much larger logistical "tail" of support units to transport them and keep them supplied.

The typical soldier needs twenty-six pounds of sustenance—mostly in the form of food and water (and the containers to carry them)—per day in the field. Modern warfare has steadily increased the weight of the logistical support a soldier requires. During the Civil War horse fodder and ammunition made each American soldier's daily requirement thirty pounds. By World War II the average soldier's requirement had doubled in weight. Today the combined weight of the daily food and water, ammunition, gear, and fuel necessary to equip a U.S. soldier has reached about 400 pounds.

Although the end of the Cold War has allowed U.S. forces stationed overseas to decline by about 50 percent since 1989, the standoff in Europe has given way to an increasing number of smaller conflicts in less predictable locations. And although the U.S. military maintains installations in most of the world's potential hot spots, large-scale mobilizations require more troops, equipment, and supplies than can be found at our overseas bases.

Consider the Gulf War. In the first three weeks of the U.S. buildup to the war, the United States moved more troops and equipment than in the first three *months* of the Korean War. According to the military's Transportation Command, by the sixth week of the operation the United States had flown more tonnage into the Middle East than it had into East Germany during the sixty-five-week Berlin airlift.



In all, the U.S. military moved more than 500,000 people and 10 million tons of supplies in 1990 and 1991, roughly equivalent to moving the entire city of Atlanta—its people and all their food, cars, and other possessions—to the Middle East.

That deployment did have some problems. The tracking of equipment and supplies en route to the Gulf was particularly poor. Forty percent of the time, for instance, soldiers at the U.S. base in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, had to open the containers they received in order to determine what was in them. And many commanders, doubting the efficiency of the system, placed duplicate orders, further straining the support chain. Such problems persist. According to a recent article in *Government Executive*, inadequate supply tracking in the first weeks of the war in Afghanistan prevented U.S. field commanders from knowing whether they had the necessary equipment and supplies to execute their battle plans.

As the U.S. military downsized after the Cold War, many logistics and support jobs were outsourced to the private sector in an effort both to save money and to make remaining personnel available for combat positions. P. W. Singer, a fellow at the Brookings Institution and an expert on military privatization, estimates that one of every fifty Americans deployed in the Gulf War was a privately employed civilian. By the time of the deployment to Bosnia, in 1995, there was one privately employed civilian for every ten people in military uniforms. For a second war in Iraq, Singer estimates, the ratio could reach 1:8.

Private contractors currently perform almost every military function

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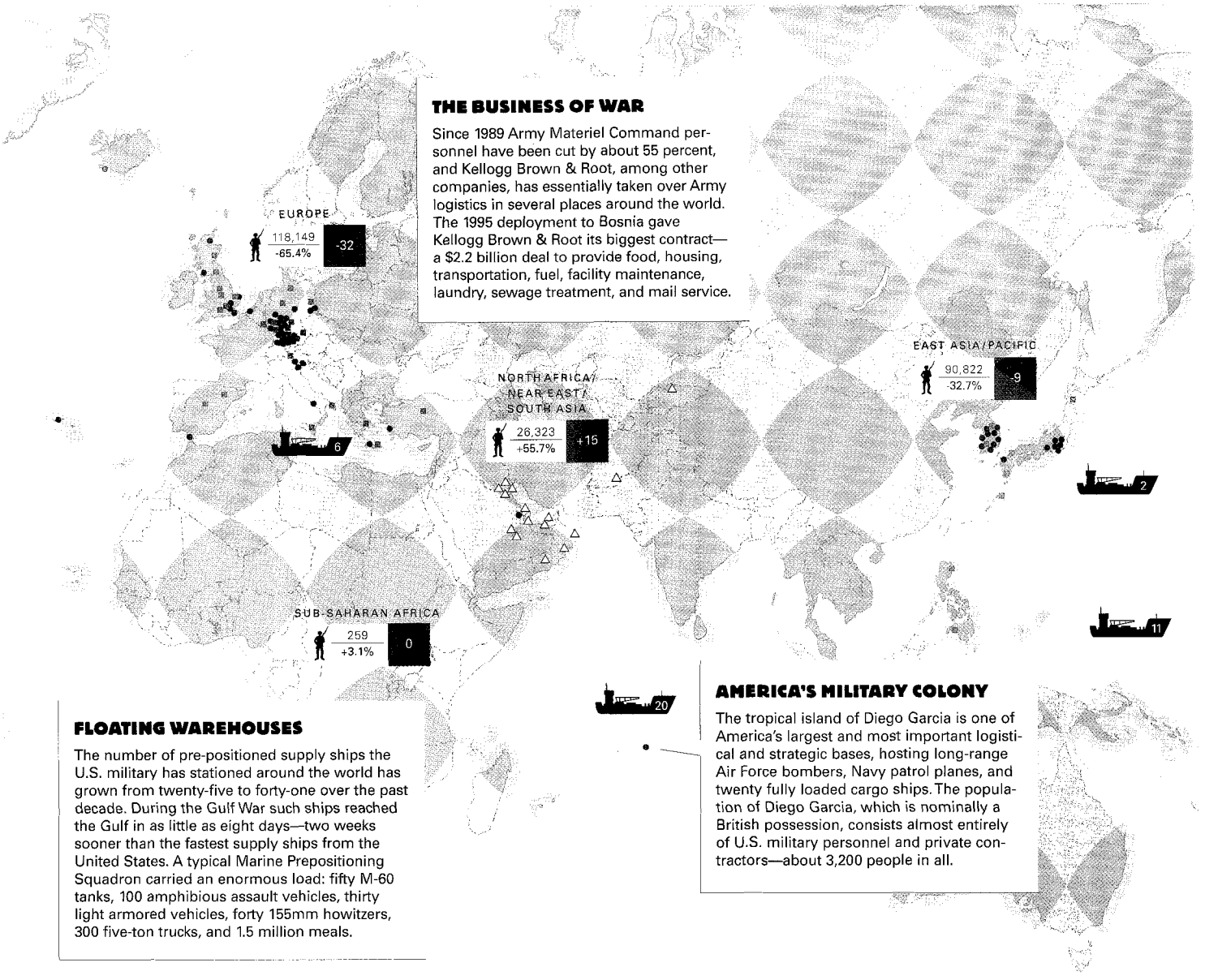


THE BUSINESS OF WAR

Since 1989 Army Materiel Command personnel have been cut by about 55 percent, and Kellogg Brown & Root, among other companies, has essentially taken over Army logistics in several places around the world. The 1995 deployment to Bosnia gave Kellogg Brown & Root its biggest contract—a $2.2 billion deal to provide food, housing, transportation, fuel, facility maintenance, laundry, sewage treatment, and mail service.

FLOATING WAREHOUSES

The number of pre-positioned supply ships the U.S. military has stationed around the world has grown from twenty-five to forty-one over the past decade. During the Gulf War such ships reached the Gulf in as little as eight days—two weeks sooner than the fastest supply ships from the United States. A typical Marine Prepositioning Squadron carried an enormous load: fifty M-60 tanks, 100 amphibious assault vehicles, thirty light armored vehicles, forty 155mm howitzers, 300 five-ton trucks, and 1.5 million meals.

AMERICA'S MILITARY COLONY

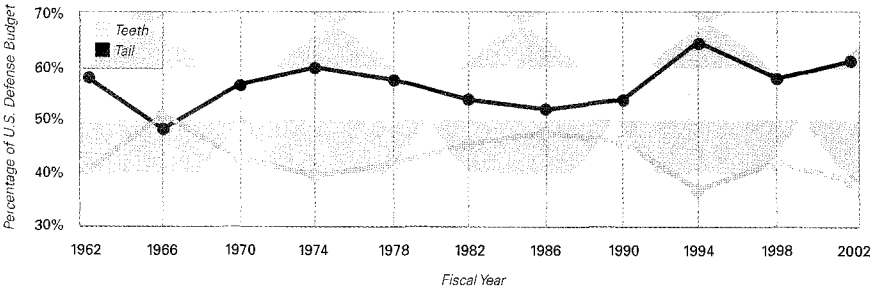
The tropical island of Diego Garcia is one of America's largest and most important logistical and strategic bases, hosting long-range Air Force bombers, Navy patrol planes, and twenty fully loaded cargo ships. The population of Diego Garcia, which is nominally a British possession, consists almost entirely of U.S. military personnel and private contractors—about 3,200 people in all.

short of direct combat, including transportation by air and sea of U.S. troops and supplies. Although the military has acquired more transport ships since the Gulf War, it still lacks the cargo capacity necessary to sustain troops in the field during a large-scale mobilization. Various partnership programs allow the military to requisition ships from the U.S. commercial fleet, but U.S.-flagged ships now represent only about one percent of the world's merchant marine. To compensate for the dwindling number of U.S. commercial ships, the military now frequently contracts with foreign companies to transport U.S. weapons, equipment, and supplies.

A recent report by the General Accounting Office noted that fully 43 percent of major U.S. military cargo deployed overseas in 2001 was carried on foreign-flagged ships. Some of these ships carried advanced weapons systems, such as Black Hawk and Apache helicopters, Bradley fighting vehicles, and Stinger-missile launchers. Reports like this have raised concerns about the U.S. military's reliance on foreign contractors. Contract crews have occasionally refused to deliver cargo, in most cases delaying the shipments until U.S.-flagged vessels were available to complete delivery. Although no such incident has seriously endangered a sensitive military shipment, dependence on foreign shipping raises troubling questions, particularly during a conflict in which the United States fights without broad international support. —*BRUCE FALCONER*

MORE DEFENSE DOLLARS SPENT ON SUPPORT THAN ON COMBAT

Save in eras of military buildup, the U.S. defense budget has historically allocated far more for logistics and support (Tail) than for combat units (Teeth)



SOURCES: DOD; GLOBAL SECURITY.ORG; *LIFTING THE FOG OF WAR*, BY BILL OWENS AND ED OFFLEY; *IN IRONS*, BY HARLAN K. ULLMAN

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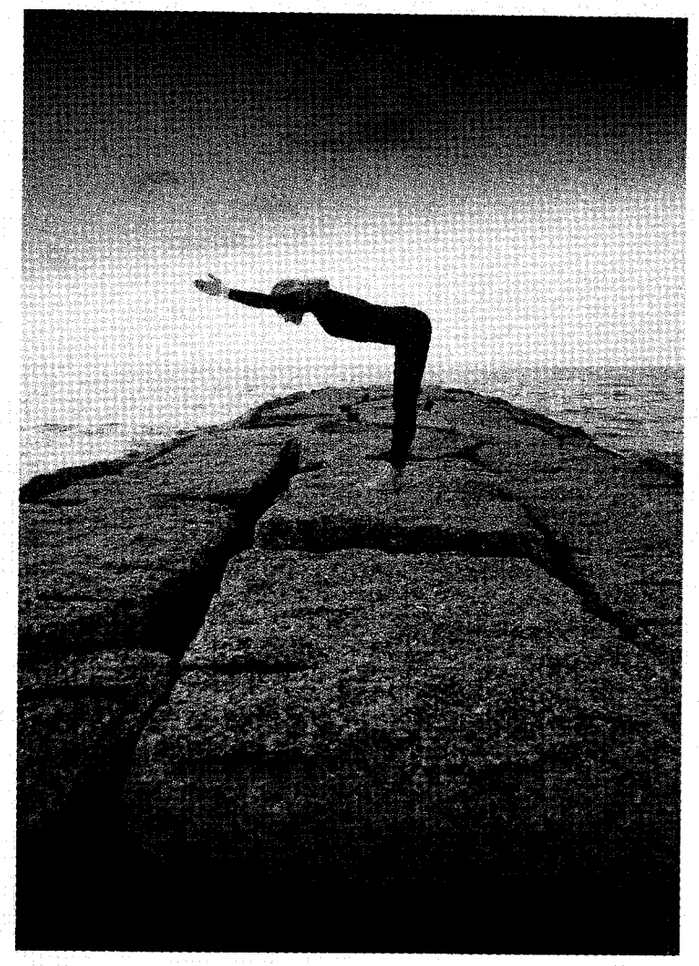

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THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF SAUD

Americans have long considered Saudi Arabia the one constant in the Arab Middle East—a source of cheap oil, political stability, and lucrative business relationships. But the country is run by an increasingly dysfunctional royal family that has been funding militant Islamic movements abroad in an attempt to protect itself from them at home. A former CIA operative argues, in an article drawn from his new book, Sleeping With the Devil, *that today's Saudi Arabia can't last much longer—and the social and economic fallout of its demise could be calamitous*

BY ROBERT BAER

Illustrations by John Ritter

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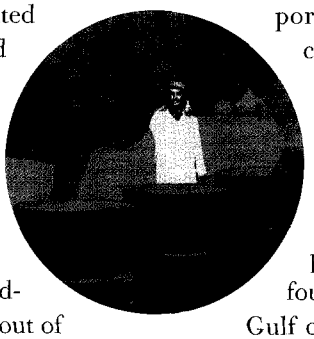

In the decades after World War II the United States and the rest of the industrialized world developed a deep and irrevocable dependence on oil from Saudi Arabia, the world's largest and most important producer. But by the mid-1980s—with the Iran-Iraq war raging, and the OPEC oil embargo a recent and traumatic memory—the supply, which had until that embargo been taken for granted, suddenly seemed at risk. Disaster planners in and out of government began to ask uncomfortable questions. What points of the Saudi oil infrastructure were most vulnerable to terrorist attack? And by what means? What sorts of disruption to the flow of oil, short-term and long-term, could be expected? These were critical concerns. Underlying them all was the fear that a major attack on the Saudi system could cause the global economy to collapse.

The Saudi system seemed—and still seems—frighteningly vulnerable to attack. Although Saudi Arabia has more than eighty active oil and natural-gas fields, and more than a thousand working wells, half its proven oil reserves are contained in only eight fields—including Ghawar, the world's largest onshore oil field, and Safaniya, the world's largest offshore oil field. Various confidential scenarios have suggested that if terrorists were simultaneously to hit only a few sensitive points "downstream" in the oil system from these eight fields—points that control more than 10,000 miles of pipe, both onshore and offshore, in which oil moves from wells to refineries and from refineries to ports, within the kingdom and without—they could effectively put the Saudis out of the oil business for about two years. And it just would not be that hard to do.

The most vulnerable point and the most spectacular target in the Saudi oil system is the Abqaiq complex—the world's largest oil-processing facility, which sits about twenty-four miles inland from the northern end of the Gulf of Bahrain. All petroleum originating in the south is pumped to Abqaiq for processing. For the first two months after a moderate to severe attack on Abqaiq, production there would slow from an average of 6.8 million barrels a day to one million barrels, a loss equivalent to one third of America's daily consumption of crude oil. For seven months following the attack, daily production would remain as much as four million barrels below normal—a reduction roughly equal to what *all* of the OPEC partners were able to effect during their 1973 embargo.

Oil is pumped from Abqaiq to loading terminals at Ras Tanura and Ju'aymah, both on Saudi Arabia's east coast. Ras Tanura moves only slightly more oil than Ju'aymah does (4.5 million barrels per day as opposed to 4.3 million barrels), but it offers a greater variety of targets and more avenues of attack. Nearly all of Ras Tanura's export oil is handled by an offshore facility known as The Sea Island, and the facility's Platform No. 4 handles half of that. A commando attack on Platform 4 by surface boat or even by a Kilo-class submarine—available in the global arms bazaar—

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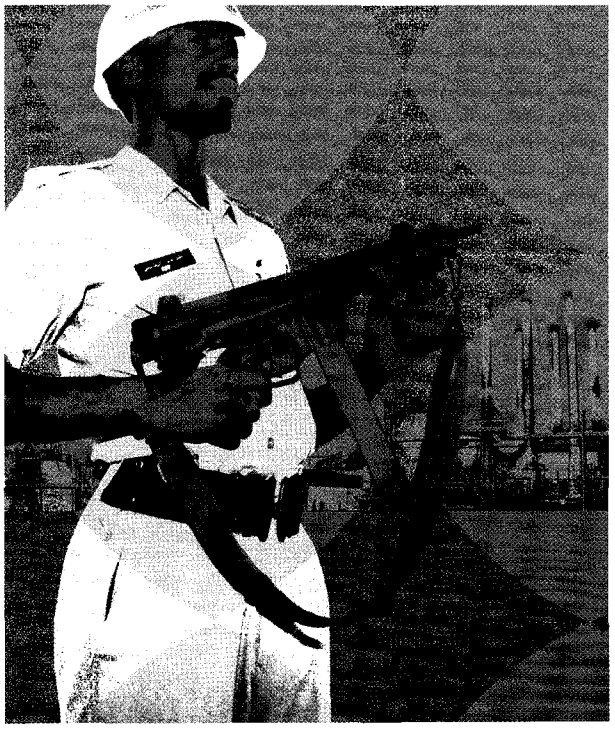
would be devastating. Such an attack would also be easy, as was made abundantly clear in 2000 by the attack on the USS *Cole*, carried out with lethal effectiveness by suicide bombers piloting nothing more than a Zodiac loaded with plastic explosives.

Another point of vulnerability is Pump Station No. 1, the station closest to Abqaiq, which sends oil uphill, into the Aramah Mountains, so that it can begin its long journey across the peninsula to the Red Sea port of Yanbu. If Pump No. 1 were taken out, the 900,000 barrels of Arabian light and superlight crude that are pumped daily to Yanbu would suddenly stop arriving, and Yanbu would be out of business.

Even the short pipe run from Abqaiq to the Gulf terminals at Ju'aymah and Ras Tanura is not without opportunity. If heavy damage were inflicted on the Qatif Junction manifold complex, which directs the flow of oil for all of eastern Saudi Arabia, the flow would be stopped for months. The pipes that connect the terminals and processing facilities can be replaced off the shelf, but those at Qatif require custom fabrication.



Promoters of Alaskan, Mexican Gulf, Caspian, and Siberian oil all like to point out that the United States has been weaning itself from Saudi Arabian oil, for protection against the effects of just such an attack on the Saudi oil system. Saudi Arabia may sit on 25 percent of the world's known oil reserves, they argue, but it provides somewhere around 18 percent of the crude oil consumed by the United States—and that is down from 28 percent in only a decade. What these people fail to mention is that Saudi Arabia has the world's only important surplus production capacity—two million barrels a day. This keeps the world market liquid. Not only that, but because the Saudis more or less determine the price of oil globally by deciding how much oil to produce, even countries that don't buy Saudi oil would be vulnerable if the flow of that oil were disrupted.

The Saudis have repeatedly used their surplus production capacity to stabilize the international oil market. They used it to break the OPEC embargo (but not before they had enriched themselves by tens of billions of dollars), in 1974. They used it again during the protracted Iran-Iraq war, to keep oil flowing to the industrialized West. They used it during the Gulf War, in 1990–1991; with help from a couple of other Gulf states, they produced an extra five million barrels a day, making up for the loss of Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil.

And they used it again on September 12, 2001. Less than twenty-four hours after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the Saudis decided to send nine million barrels of oil to the United States over the next two weeks. The result was that the United States experienced only a slight inflation spike in the wake of the most devastating terrorist attack in history. Had that same surplus capacity been taken out of play with twenty pounds of Semtex, all bets would have been off. The U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve can support the domestic market for only about seventy days. And if Saudi Arabia's contribution to the world's oil supply were cut off, crude petroleum could quite realistically rise from around $40 a barrel today to as much as $150 a barrel. It wouldn't take long for other economic and social calamities to follow.

Americans have long considered Saudi Arabia the one constant in the Arab Middle East. The Saudis banked our oil under their sand, and losing Saudi Arabia would be like losing the Federal Reserve. Even if the Saudi rulers one day did turn anti-American, the argument went, they would never stop pumping oil, because that would mean cutting their own throats. This, at any rate, is the way we looked at the matter before fifteen Saudis and four other terrorists launched their suicide attacks on September 11; before Osama bin Laden suddenly became for the Arab world the most popular Saudi in history; before *USA Today* reported last summer that nearly four out of five hits on a clandestine al Qaeda Web site came from inside Saudi Arabia; and before a recent report commissioned by the UN Security Council indicated that Saudi Arabia has transferred $500 million to al Qaeda over the past decade.

Five extended families in the Middle East own about 60 percent of the world's oil. The Saud family, which rules Saudi Arabia, controls more than a third of that amount. This is the fulcrum on which the global economy teeters, and the House of Saud knows what the West is only beginning to learn: that it presides over a kingdom dangerously at war with itself. In the air in Riyadh and Jidda is the conviction that oil money has corrupted the ruling family beyond redemption, even as the general population has grown and gotten poorer; that the country's leaders have failed to protect fellow Muslims in Palestine and elsewhere;

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and that the House of Saud has let Islam be humiliated—that, in short, the country needs a radical "purification."

We can try to wish this away all we want. But the reality is getting harder and harder to ignore. Per capita income in Saudi Arabia fell from $28,600 in 1981 to $6,800 in 2001. The country's birth rate has soared, becoming one of the highest in the world. Its police force is corrupt, and the rule of law is a sham. Saudi Arabia almost certainly leads the world in public beheadings, the venue for which is often a Riyadh plaza popularly known as Chop-Chop Square. Illegal arms routinely flow into and out of the country. Taking into account its murky "off-budget" defense spending, Saudi Arabia may spend more per capita on defense than any other country in the world (some estimates put the figure at 50 percent of its total revenues), and the House of Saud believes this is necessary for its personal protection. The regime is threatened by increasingly hostile neighbors—and by determined enemies within the country's borders. Popular preachers all over Saudi Arabia call openly for a *jihad* against the West—a designation that clearly includes the royal family itself—in terms as vitriolic as anything heard in Iran at the height of the Islamic revolution there. The kingdom's mosque schools have become a breeding ground for militant Islam. Recent attacks in Bali, Bosnia, Chechnya, Kenya, and the United States, not to mention those against U.S. military personnel within Saudi Arabia, all point back to these schools—and to the House of Saud itself, which, terrified at the prospect of a militant uprising against it, shovels protection money at the fundamentalists and tries to divert their attention abroad.

An attack on Saudi Arabia's largest oil-processing facility could create a reduction in the flow of oil roughly equal to what *all* of OPEC effected in its 1973 embargo.

Recent examples of Saudi support for the fundamentalists abound. In 1997 a high-ranking member of the royal family coordinated a $100 million aid package for the Taliban. In Los Angeles two of the 9/11 hijackers met with a Saudi working for a company contracted to the Ministry of Defense. A raid on the Hamburg apartment of a suspected accomplice of the hijackers turned up the business card of a Saudi diplomat attached to the religious-affairs section of the embassy in Berlin. Most of the more than 650 al Qaeda prisoners being held at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba—"the worst of the worst," according to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld—are rumored to be Saudis.

I served for twenty-one years with the CIA's Directorate of Operations in the Middle East, and during all my years there I accepted on faith my government's easy assumption that the money the House of Saud was dumping into weaponry and national security meant that the family's armed forces and bodyguards could keep its members—and their oil—safe. "The royal family is like the fingers of a hand," my colleagues at the State Department liked to say. "Threaten it, and they become a fist." I no longer believe this. Saudi Arabia is more and more a breathtakingly irrational state. For a surprising number of Saudis, including some members of the royal family, taking the kingdom's oil off the world market—even for years, and at the risk of destroying their own economy—is an acceptable alternative to the status quo.

Saudi Arabia has existed as a formal nation only since 1932, when the tribal leader Abdul Aziz ibn Saud gained control of much of the Arabian Peninsula, named the territory after his clan, and proclaimed himself king. But the House of Saud had been powerful in the region ever since the eighteenth century, when the radical cleric Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, the founder of the puritanical Wahhabi movement, wandered into Dar'iya, near present-day Riyadh, and made a bargain with its ruler, Muhammad ibn Saud. The Saud family would provide the generals, and the Wahhabis would provide the foot soldiers. Until recently it was a marriage made in heaven.

If I had to pick a single moment when the House of Saud truly began to fall apart, it would be when Abdul Aziz ibn Saud's son Fahd, who has been king since 1982, suffered a near fatal stroke, in 1995. As soon as the royal family heard about Fahd's stroke, it went on high alert. From all over Riyadh came the *thump-thump* of helicopters and the sirens of convoys converging on the hospital where Fahd had been taken.

Among the first to arrive were Jawhara al-Ibrahim, Fahd's fourth and favorite wife, and their spoiled, megalomaniac twenty-nine-year-old son Abdul Aziz—or "Azouzi" ("Dearie"), as Fahd called him. Anyone who knew how Fahd's court ran knew the extent to which Fahd had come to depend on Jawhara, who helped him with everything from remembering his medicine to handling intricate problems of foreign policy. If a prince wanted a matter immediately brought to Fahd's attention, he called Jawhara. As for Abdul Aziz, he was the youngest of Fahd's children and the apple of his father's eye. Fahd indulged him in everything. Stories circulated widely about Abdul Aziz's riding a Harley-Davidson inside his father's palace, chasing servants and smashing furniture. Most of the royal family found the king's indulgence strange. Abdul Aziz was pimply, craven, a bit slow. Apparently, though, he was regarded as the king's good-luck charm. Fahd's favorite soothsayer had once told him that as long as Abdul Aziz was by his side, the king would have a long, fulfilling life.

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So Fahd did not complain when Abdul Aziz spent $4.6 billion on a sprawling palace and theme park outside Riyadh, because Abdul Aziz was "interested" in history. The property includes a scale model of old Mecca, with actors attending mosque and chanting prayers twenty-four hours a day, and also replicas of the Alhambra, Medina, and half a dozen other Islamic landmarks.

Next to arrive at the hospital, in a great show of solidarity, were Fahd's full brothers—Sultan, the Defense Minister; Nayef, the Interior Minister; and Salman, the governor of Riyadh province. To outsiders, they were a tight bunch. Their mother, from the Sudayri clan, had taught them from an early age to stick together or risk being elbowed out by the forty-odd other children of their father.

Other princes—the children and grandchildren of Ibn Saud's children—hurried to the hospital too, from all over the kingdom and the rest of the world. Private executive jets were lined up wing to wing at Riyadh's airport. These princes couldn't get anywhere near Fahd, but by being close at hand they could pick up more-reliable news and, just as important, demonstrate their fealty. Most of them lived off his largesse—royal stipends, which ran from $800 to $270,000 a month. The princes knew they were breaking the treasury—all told, their brethren numbered 10,000 to 12,000. Would Crown Prince Abdullah—Fahd's half brother, a seventy-one-year-old reformer who was next in line for the throne—cut back on their stipends, or even eliminate them if Fahd died? They had to stick around to find out.

A recent report commissioned by the UN Security Council indicated that Saudi Arabia has transferred $500 million to al Qaeda over the past decade.

At this point Fahd's brothers were calling doctors in the United States and Europe. They wanted to know not whether Fahd would ever recover his mental capacities, or what kind of life he would be able to live, but what it would take to keep his heart beating and his body warm. Money, of course, wasn't a problem. They told the doctors they were prepared to lease as many Boeing 747 cargo jets as needed to bring in mobile hospitals and medical teams. The doctors couldn't understand the reasoning behind the questions—but only because they didn't understand the politics of the kingdom. What the family knew and the doctors didn't was that Crown Prince Abdullah had long been eager to take power. The only way to keep him at bay was to keep Fahd alive—God willing, until Abdullah died.

Abdullah had always been the odd prince out. To begin with, his mother was from the Rashid tribe, traditional enemies of the Saud. Ibn Saud had married her to cement a truce with the Rashid, and although the Rashid were now loyal subjects, Abdullah was still mistrusted by Fahd's full brothers. Almost alone among the top members of the royal family, Abdullah had chosen the way of the desert, turning his back on the luxuries of Riyadh, Jidda, and Ta'if. He never vacationed lavishly in Europe, unlike King Fahd and his entourage, who typically spent $5 million a day during visits to the palace at Marbella, on the Spanish Riviera. Abdullah preferred to spend his time in a tent, drinking camel's milk and eating dates. He interspersed his conversation with Bedouin aphorisms and turns of phrase. All his children were raised according to the customs of the desert. It is Abdullah who has recently called publicly for democratic reforms, the reining in of the conservative clergy, and military disengagement from the United States.

The royal family hated being reminded that they had abandoned their Bedouin roots, but they hated still more that Abdullah was trying to cut back royal corruption and entitlements. Aping the senior members of the family, the lesser princes had fantastic financial expectations, and their stipends didn't suffice. The third-generation princes were getting only about $19,000 a month—a fraction of what they needed for the lifestyles they sought. To keep even a modest yacht on the French Riviera requires a million dollars a year. What were they supposed to do? In order to make ends meet they had been getting into nastier and nastier business, taking bribes from construction firms (mostly the bin Laden family's) seeking government contracts, getting involved in arms deals, expropriating property from commoners, and selling Saudi visas to guest workers. Another trick they'd discovered was borrowing money from private banks and simply refusing to pay it back. It wasn't as if the larger family could somehow discipline or shame them. There were so many princes that they didn't even all know one another.

Abdullah had made no secret of his intention to put an end to the thievery when he became king—and for a while it looked as if he might get his way even before becoming king. In the mid-1990s, as Saudi Arabia was facing increasingly dire financial difficulties, he persuaded King Fahd to appoint a handful of reformist ministers. Abdullah first had them zero in on expropriations. The practice had become so widespread among the lesser princes that it was completely alienating Saudi Arabia's traditional merchant class and fledgling middle class. A prince might walk into a restaurant, see that it was doing well, and write out a check to buy the place, usually well below market price. There was nothing the owner could do. He knew that if he resisted, he'd end up in jail on trumped-up charges.

The senior princes used their government positions to do the same thing, but on a much grander scale. One of them would pick out a valuable piece of property—maybe a

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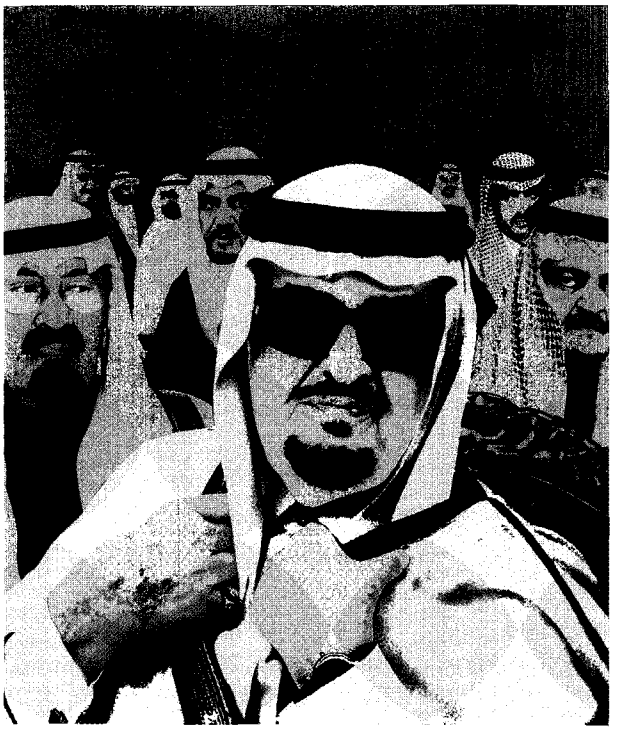
particularly good location for a shopping mall or a new road—and then order a court to condemn it in the name of the state, which would clear the way for the king to award it to him. The money to be earned was staggering, and senior princes had started to rely on the practice to maintain their ever more bloated personal budgets. In Abdullah's view, however, crooked property deals and the like were only a small part of the problem. The off-budget deals were a much bigger part. In off-budget spending, revenue from oil sales goes directly to special accounts, bypassing the Saudi treasury altogether. The money is then used to pay for pet projects, from defense procurement to construction, with no government audits or accountability of any sort. Commissions and bribes are enormous.

As a reformer, Abdullah was kept out of the tight circle that gathered around Fahd after his stroke. Bitterness against Abdullah within the family was so deep that he was in fact blamed for the stroke. One version had it that Fahd and Abdullah had been on the telephone, arguing about who would attend a meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council in Oman. It was a fundamentally unimportant decision, but relations between the two men had become so toxic, it was said, that Fahd's anger brought on the event. Another rumor in circulation held that Fahd and Abdullah had been arguing about what they always argued about—looming financial collapse. There were even whispers that Abdullah had intentionally provoked Fahd, knowing his health wouldn't withstand a shouting match.



It eventually became clear that Fahd would live, but the extent of his impairment also became clear—embarrassingly so when, during a therapy session not long after the stroke, Fahd defecated in his pool, in front of his family. His mind was affected too. Those close to him knew that he would never truly rule again, though he is still led out for ceremonial appearances.

A year and a half after Fahd's stroke Sultan had come to so despise Abdullah that he stopped attending cabinet meetings chaired by him. For Abdullah, the feeling was mutual. In July of 1997 he simply bypassed the Council of Ministers, which was heavily stacked in favor of the Sudayri, and tried to get Fahd to sign off on decrees and laws he thought needed passing. Jawhara and Abdul Aziz teamed up to thwart him.

Mind you, it is not as if the rest of the Fahd clan is united. Sultan, Salman, and Nayef may have arrived at the hospital together in a show of solidarity, but they got a rude shock once they pushed through the front doors. Jawhara and Abdul Aziz blocked them from seeing their brother. The two had set up camp outside Fahd's hospital room and were deciding who and what would or would not get in. That included ministers, senior princes, and doctors, along with petitions, decrees, and everything else.

Saudi succession doesn't operate according to primogeniture. By tradition, senior princes come to a consensus on succession, usually choosing one from their ranks who is thought to have the necessary experience and wisdom. So far the system had served the royal family well, even though Abdullah had become a gadfly, but now Fahd's brothers were afraid that Abdul Aziz was trying to circumvent custom and place himself higher in the line of succession. For one thing, he had started getting more and more involved in national security, from foreign affairs to intelligence. Even the Americans noticed it. When the commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East, General J. H. Binford Peay, came to Riyadh to meet with Fahd, in July of 1997, he was surprised to find Abdul Aziz at Fahd's side, whispering in his father's ear. Where was Abdullah? What had become of Sultan? Peay had to meet with Abdullah separately, and even then Abdullah didn't talk about the issues at hand.

What really worried some members of his family was that Abdul Aziz was funding radical Wahhabi causes and was gaining strength and popularity as a result. They had little doubt that money was going to clerics and causes that were associated with Osama bin Laden. Abdul Aziz hadn't rediscovered his faith, of course: he was courting favor with the Wahhabis because he knew he would need their support to become king. In September of 1997 he helped to coordinate that $100 million aid package for the Taliban, even though the Taliban were protecting bin Laden—a man who not only had vowed to overthrow the House of Saud but also seemed increasingly capable of doing so. Abdul Aziz was buying support wherever he could find it. In December of 1993 Abdul Aziz authorized $100,000 for a Kansas City mosque. On September 15, 1995, he opened the King Fahd Academy, in Bonn, and two days later he dedicated a new mosque there. Nine days after that he invited

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the head of the Islamic Society of Spain, Mansur Abdul Salam, to Riyadh. In May of 1996 he and Jawhara arranged for King Fahd to release Muhammad al Fasi from prison. Al Fasi had been imprisoned for opposing the Gulf War and the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia; in other words, he shared some of bin Laden's chief grievances. In December of 1999 the press finally caught wind of Abdul Aziz's penchant for backing radical Islamic causes. One regional account made available by U.S. translation services noted that he was believed to have been funding an associate of bin Laden's, Sa'd al Burayk, who in turn was giving the money to Islamic groups dedicated to killing Russian soldiers and civilians in Chechnya. Nayef promised to put a stop to Abdul Aziz and bring his charity back under control—but he appears to have done nothing.

All the while, throughout the 1990s, the royal family kept growing and growing. A prince might sire forty to seventy children during a lifetime of healthy copulation; however, the resources to support the growing population of the entitled were shrinking, not just in relative terms but in absolute ones. Young royals were pushing up from below, chafing at leaders who were slipping into their late seventies and eighties. The incapacitated King Fahd will turn eighty this year; Crown Prince Abdullah will turn seventy-nine. Many of the most active court intriguers are also in their seventies.

The Saudi royals number 30,000 and may grow to 60,000 in a generation. What would oil have to cost to support even the most basic privileges they now enjoy?

The House of Saud currently has some 30,000 members. The number will be 60,000 in a generation, maybe much higher. According to reliable sources, anecdotal evidence, and the Saudi gossip machine, the royal family is obsessed with gambling, alcohol, prostitution, and parties. And the commissions and other outlays to fund their vices are constant. What would the price of oil have to be in 2025 to support even the most basic privileges—for example, free air travel anywhere in the world on Saudia, the Saudi national airline—that the Saudi royals have come to enjoy? Once the family numbers 60,000, or 100,000, will there even be a spare seat for a mere commoner who wants to fly out of Riyadh or Jidda? Reformers among the royal family talk about cutting back the perks, but that's a hard package to sell.

Saudi Arabia operates the world's most advanced welfare state, a kind of anti-Marxian non-workers' paradise. Saudis get free health care and interest-free home and business loans. College education is free within the kingdom, and heavily subsidized for those who study abroad. In one of the world's driest spots water is almost free. Electricity, domestic air travel, gasoline, and telephone service are available at far below cost. Many of the kingdom's best and brightest—the most well-educated and, in theory, the best prepared for the work world—have little motivation to do any work at all.

About a quarter of Saudi Arabia's population, and more than a third of all residents aged fifteen to sixty-four, are foreign nationals, allowed into the kingdom to do the dirty work in the oil fields and to provide domestic help, but also to program the computers and manage the refineries. Seventy percent of all jobs in Saudi Arabia—and close to 90 percent of all private-sector jobs—are filled by foreigners.

Among men, at least, the Saudis have an admirably high literacy rate, especially for a place that only three generations back was inhabited mostly by nomadic tribesmen. About 85 percent of Saudi men aged fifteen and older can read and write, as opposed to less than 70 percent of Saudi women of the same age. But because in recent years the Saudi education system has been largely entrusted to Wahhabi fundamentalists, as a form of appeasement that many in the royal family hope will direct the fundamentalists' animus at foreign targets, its products are generally ill prepared to compete in a technological age or a global economy. Today two out of every three Ph.D.s earned in Saudi Arabia are in Islamic studies. Doctorates are only very rarely granted in computer sciences, engineering, and other worldly vocations. Younger Saudis are being educated to take part in a world that will exist only if the Wahhabi *jihad*ists succeed in turning back the clock not just a few decades but a few centuries.

Then there's the demographic problem. Saudi Arabia has one of the highest birth rates in the world outside Africa—37.25 births for every 1,000 citizens last year, compared with 14.5 per 1,000 in the United States. Ninety-seven percent of all Saudis are sixty-four or younger, and half the population is under eighteen. The simple presence of so many people of working age, and especially so many just now ready to enter the work force, places enormous pressure on an economy—particularly one designed less to accommodate those who want to work than to provide sustenance for those who would rather contemplate original intent in the Koran. A middle class stabilizes society. Saudi Arabia's middle class is imploding.

The functioning of the world's most advanced welfare state is influenced overwhelmingly by fluctuations in the price of oil. In 1981, when the entire kingdom was in effect being put on the dole, oil was selling at nearly $40 a barrel, and the annual per capita income was $28,600. A decade later, just before Iraq invaded Kuwait, refiners were able to buy oil for about $15 a barrel. The Gulf War sent prices back up to about $36 a barrel before they quickly fell.

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Today a barrel of oil once again fetches around $40, but twenty years' worth of inflation, combined with a population explosion, has brought per capita income down to below $7,000. Because roughly 85 percent of Saudi Arabia's total revenues are oil-based, every dollar increase in the price of a barrel of oil means a gain of about $3 billion to the Saudi treasury. In the early 1980s the kingdom boasted cash reserves on the order of $120 billion; today the figure is estimated to be $21 billion.

Given all these threatening forces, one might think that every map in official Washington would have a red flag sticking out of Riyadh, as a reminder that Saudi Arabia is on life support. The truth is quite the opposite. Before 9/11 the United States never issued an advisory indicating the obvious security problems for Americans traveling to Saudi Arabia. Dependents of U.S. citizens residing there were never advised to leave. According to official Washington, even today the country is stable: its government is in undisputed control of its borders; its police force and army are efficient and loyal; its people are well clothed, well fed, and well educated.

Consider the way the State Department has handled visas for Saudi nationals. Until 9/11, Saudis were not even required to appear at the U.S. embassy in Riyadh or the consulate in Jidda for a visa interview. Under a system called Visa Express a Saudi had only to send his passport, an application, and the application fee to a travel agent. The Saudi travel agent, in other words, stood in for the U.S. government. Just about any Saudi who had the money could book a flight to New York after a mere twenty-hour wait. Until recently Saudis were exempt from the new anti-terrorism entry regulations that apply to citizens of other Middle Eastern countries, despite the fact that most of the 9/11 terrorists were Saudis.

"The Saudi Arabian Government, at all levels, continued to reaffirm its commitment to combating terrorism," the State Department's 1999 report *Patterns of Global Terrorism* soberly asserted. The report went on to state, "The Government of Saudi Arabia continued to investigate the bombing in June 1996 of the Khobar Towers." This was false; Prince Nayef, Saudi Arabia's grim Interior Minister, had been stalling the investigation for years. Nayef told the kingdom's other senior princes that he was reluctant to help the United States with the Khobar investigation. In one heated meeting Nayef ignored Defense Minister Sultan when Sultan warned that stonewalling the FBI would end up causing a rift with the United States. To make his point Nayef went out of his way to avoid meeting the FBI's director, Louis Freeh, when Freeh showed up in Saudi Arabia to see what he could do to get the Khobar investigation going. Nayef put himself out of reach—on his yacht, anchored off the coast near Jidda, in the Red Sea—and turned the chore over to two low-ranking officials in the internal-security service, neither of whom knew anything about the Khobar investigation.

Even after the 1998 attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which were organized by Osama bin Laden from his bases in Afghanistan, the Saudi royals continued to aid the Taliban and its main supporter in the region, Pakistan. This was hardly a secret: in July of 2000 *Petroleum Intelligence Weekly*, which calls itself the "bible" of the international petroleum industry, reported that Saudi Arabia was sending as many as 150,000 barrels of oil a day to Afghanistan and Pakistan in off-budget foreign aid that had a value of something like $2 million a day. Furthermore, the United States had known since 1994 that the Saudis were supporting Pakistan's nuclear development program, ultimately contributing upwards of a billion dollars. More recently, because Saudi law does not allow foreign agencies to directly question Saudi citizens, the FBI has not been allowed to interview Saudi suspects, including the families of the fifteen Saudi hijackers, about the 9/11 attacks. For more than a year after September 11 Saudi Arabia refused to provide advance manifests for flights coming into the United States—which could have led to a basic and potentially fatal breach of security. Although there are plenty of possible al Qaeda members awaiting trial, as of this writing there hasn't been a single Saudi arrest related to 9/11—not even of a material witness.

As for the CIA, the Agency let the State Department take the lead and decided simply to ignore Saudi Arabia. The CIA recruited no Saudi diplomats to tell us, for instance, what the religious-affairs sections of Saudi embassies were up to. The CIA's Directorate of Intelligence avoided writing national intelligence estimates—appraisals, drawn from various U.S. intelligence services, about areas of potential crisis—on Saudi Arabia, knowing that such estimates, especially when negative, have a tendency to find their way onto the front pages of U.S. newspapers, where they might have an undesired effect on public opinion. The CIA's line became the same as State's: There's no need to worry about Saudi Arabia and its oil reserves.

No need to worry, of course, means business as usual—and for decades now that's meant that almost every Washington figure worth mentioning has been involved with companies doing major deals with Saudi Arabia. Spending a lot of money was a tacit part of the U.S.-Saudi relationship practically from the very beginning: the Americans would buy Saudi Arabia's oil and would provide the Saudis with protection and security; the Saudis would buy American weapons, construction services, communications systems, and drilling rigs. In the global-economics game this is known as "recycling," and in this case it worked well: two-way trade between Saudi Arabia and the United States grew from $56.2 million in 1950 to $19.3 billion in 2000—an average annual growth rate of nearly 70 percent.

Consider the case of the Carlyle Group—a private investment company, founded in 1987, that almost since its inception has been conducting immensely profitable

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business with Saudi Arabia. From 1993 to 2002 the chairman of Carlyle was Frank Carlucci, who served first as Ronald Reagan's National Security Adviser and then as his Secretary of Defense. Carlyle's senior counselor is James Baker, who served as Secretary of State under George H.W. Bush—who in his post-presidency also happens to be a Carlyle adviser. Others who hang their hats at Carlyle include Arthur Levitt, the head of the Securities and Exchange Commission under Bill Clinton, and now Carlyle's senior adviser; John Major, a former Prime Minister of Great Britain and the current chairman of Carlyle Europe; William Kennard, who chaired the Federal Communications Commission during the second Clinton Administration; Afsaneh Mashayekhi Beschloss, a former treasurer and chief investment officer of the World Bank; and Richard Darman, who ran the Office of Management and Budget under the first President Bush and also served as deputy secretary of the treasury under Reagan.

Carlyle isn't the only company in this business. Halliburton, run by Dick Cheney between his stints as Secretary of Defense under the first George Bush and Vice President under the second, has been a frequent beneficiary of Saudi money. In late 2001 Halliburton landed a $140 million contract to develop a new Saudi oil field. For many years Condoleezza Rice, now President Bush's National Security Adviser, served on the board of Chevron, which merged in 2001 with Texaco. The new corporation, ChevronTexaco, is a partner with Saudi Aramco in several ventures and has recently joined forces with Nimir Petroleum to develop oil fields in Kazakhstan. Currently on the board of ChevronTexaco are Carla Hills, who served as the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under Gerald Ford and as a U.S. trade representative under George H.W. Bush; the former Louisiana senator J. Bennett Johnston, who made a specialty of energy issues while in Congress; and the former Georgia senator Sam Nunn, who served most notably as head of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Elsewhere, Nicholas Brady, the Secretary of the Treasury under the first President Bush, and Edith Holiday, a former assistant to the first President Bush, serve on the board of Amerada Hess, which has teamed with some of Saudi Arabia's most powerful royal-family members to exploit the rich oil resources of Azerbaijan. In 1998 Amerada Hess formed a joint venture, Delta Hess, with the Saudi-owned Delta Oil to explore and exploit petroleum resources in Azerbaijan. The Houston-based Frontera Resources Corporation joined the Azerbaijan hunt the same year, teaming with the newly created Delta Hess. Among the members of Frontera's board of advisers: the former Texas senator, former Secretary of the Treasury, and 1988 Democratic vice-presidential candidate Lloyd Bentsen; and John Deutch, a former CIA director.

Just to make sure that no one upsets the workings of this system, perhaps by meddling in internal Saudi affairs, Saudi Arabia now keeps possibly as much as a trillion dollars on deposit in U.S. banks—an agreement worked out in the early eighties by the Reagan Administration, in an effort to get the Saudis to offset U.S. government budget deficits. The Saudis hold another trillion dollars or so in the U.S. stock market. This gives them a remarkable degree of leverage in Washington. If they were suddenly to withdraw all their holdings in this country, the effect, though perhaps not as catastrophic as having a major source of oil shut down, would still be devastating.

Leading U.S. corporations hire and rehire known Saudi crooks and known financiers of terrorism, so that they can land deals back in Saudi Arabia.

The U.S.-Saudi relationship would not be as cozy as it is without there being someone well connected on both sides who can move comfortably between them. That someone is the fifty-four-year-old Prince Bandar. Although he ranks low on the royal bloodline (his father is King Fahd's brother Sultan, the Saudi Defense Minister, but his mother was a house servant), Prince Bandar has been the Saudi ambassador to the United States since 1983. He is the only foreign ambassador to have a security detail assigned to him by the State Department. A daredevil fighter pilot in his younger years, a Muslim with a taste for single-malt Scotch, and an envoy with a perpetually open wallet, Bandar has proved adept at working both the public and the private sides of diplomacy. As the Saudi military attaché to the United States, he scored a stunning coup in 1981 by persuading Congress to approve the sale of AWACS air-defense technology to his country, over the objections of AIPAC, the pro-Israeli Washington lobby. Later, as ambassador, Bandar conveyed the kingdom's thanks by secretly placing $10 million in a Vatican City bank, as reported last year in *The Washington Post*; the money, deposited at the request of William Casey, then the director of the CIA, was to be used by Italy's Christian Democratic Party in a campaign against Italian Communists. Later still, in June of 1984, Bandar started paying out $30 million from the royal family so that Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North could buy arms for the Nicaraguan contras.

It is on the personal front, however, where Bandar shines. A visit in the early nineties to the summer home of George H.W. Bush, in Kennebunkport, Maine, earned the prince the affectionate family sobriquet "Bandar Bush."

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Bandar reciprocated by inviting Bush to hunt pheasant on his estate in England. For good measure he also contributed a million dollars to the construction of the Bush Presidential Library, in College Station, Texas. King Fahd sent another million to Barbara Bush's campaign against illiteracy. (He had donated a million dollars to Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign against drugs four years earlier.) Bandar was once Colin Powell's racquetball partner.

Press accounts portrayed Bandar as largely on the outside during the Clinton years, passing melancholy weeks at his mountain compound in Aspen, Colorado (more than 50,000 square feet, thirty-two rooms, sixteen bathrooms). If Bandar was less physically present, however, he was his usual useful self. In 1992 he persuaded King Fahd to donate $20 million to the University of Arkansas's new Center for Middle Eastern Studies, a gesture of respect for the Arkansas governor who had just been elected President. He is said to have played a role in persuading the Libyans, in 1999, to turn over two intelligence operatives suspected in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, over Lockerbie, Scotland. As he reportedly does at the end of every administration, whether he is perceived as friend or foe, Bandar also invited each of the Clinton Cabinet members out to dinner, at a restaurant of their choice, in a private room or a public one, depending on their willingness to be seen with him.

Prince Bandar once told associates that he is very careful to look after U.S. government officials when they return to private life. "If the reputation then builds that the Saudis take care of friends when they leave office," Bandar has observed, according to a source cited in *The Washington Post*, "you'd be surprised how much better friends you have who are just coming into office." Practically every deal with the Saudis eventually becomes hard to trace, lost in some desert sandstorm back near the wellheads where the money sprang from in the first place. Many of Washington's lobbyists, PR firms, and lawyers live off Saudi money. Just about every Washington think tank has taken it. So have the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Children's National Medical Center, and every presidential library built in the past thirty years.

Bandar hurtled back to prominence after the election of George W. Bush, occupying a spot somewhere between ambassador and permanently enthroned visiting head of state. But after 9/11 he began to experience some difficulty in maintaining a positive Saudi image. In March of last year agents of the Treasury Department raided the northern-Virginia offices of four Saudi-based charities: the SAAR Foundation, the Safa Trust, the International Institute for Islamic Thought (IIIT), and the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO). Also raided was the local headquarters for the Muslim World League, an umbrella group funded by the Saudi government. All five organizations are located only a few miles from Bandar's mansion overlooking the Potomac River. The organizations can point to a long list of genuinely humanitarian causes they have aided and supported; but they also have a long list of alarming associations. Testifying before Congress in August of 2002, Matthew Levitt, a senior fellow with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, noted that Tarik Hamdi, an IIIT employee, had personally provided Osama bin Laden with batteries for his satellite phone—a critical link in the stateless world that bin Laden inhabits. IIIT and the SAAR Foundation are suspected of helping to finance Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the sponsors of some of the most lethal suicide bombers in the Middle East. From 1986 to 1994 Muhammad Jamal Khalifa, a brother-in-law to Osama bin Laden, ran the IIRO's Philippine office, from which he channeled funds to al Qaeda. Only excellent work by the Indian police prevented another IIRO employee, Sayed Abu Nasir, from bombing the U.S. consulates in Calcutta and Madras.

In mid-2002 word leaked to the press that the semi-official Defense Policy Board, chaired by the notorious cold warrior Richard Perle, had sponsored a report declaring Saudi Arabia to be part of the problem of international terrorism rather than part of the solution. Saudi Arabia, the report stated, was "central to the self-destruction of the Arab world and the chief vector of the Arab crisis and its outwardly-directed aggression." It went on to say, "The Saudis are active at every level of the terror chain, from planners to financiers, from cadre to foot-soldier, from ideologist to cheerleader." Within hours Colin Powell was on the phone to the Saudi Foreign Minister, assuring him—and through him, the royal family—that such apostasy was not and never would be the official stance of the Bush Adminis-

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tration. To reinforce the message, President Bush invited Bandar down to the family ranch at Crawford, Texas.

And yet the image problems have continued. In October of 2001, NATO forces raided the offices of the Saudi High Commission for Aid to Bosnia, founded by Prince Salman, and discovered, among other items, photos of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, before and after they were bombed; photos of the World Trade Center and the USS *Cole*; information on the use of crop-duster planes; and materials for forging U.S. State Department badges. His job wasn't made any easier when, in the fall of last year, Bandar found himself having to explain away the fact that about $130,000 in charitable contributions from his wife, Princess Haifa, might have ended up with two of the 9/11 hijackers.

In the wake of these revelations a U.S. delegation headed by Alan Larson, President Bush's undersecretary of state for economic affairs, traveled to Riyadh last November, ostensibly to prod the Saudis toward increasing the surveillance of their charities and financial networks. But U.S. and Saudi sources say that one of the main reasons for Larson's trip was to ensure that if the United States invaded Iraq, the Saudis would guarantee the flow of extra oil into the world market. The U.S. embrace of the House of Saud was as tight as ever.

Washington's answer for Saudi Arabia—apart from repeating that nothing is wrong—is to suggest that a little democracy will cure everything. Talk the royal family into ceding at least part of its authority; support the reform-minded princes; set up a model parliament; co-opt the firebrands with a cabinet position or two, a minor political party, and some outright bribery; send Jimmy Carter in to monitor the first election; and in a few generations Riyadh will be Ankara, maybe even London. The governmental mechanism may be faulty, the Washington view maintains, but the people who administer the government are for the most part committed to rooting out corruption, rounding up terrorists, and recognizing the right of the people to self-government.

It's utter nonsense, of course. If an election were held in Saudi Arabia today, if anyone who wanted to could run for the office of president, and if people could vote their hearts without fear of having their heads cut off afterward in Chop-Chop Square, Osama bin Laden would be elected in a landslide—not because the Saudi people want to wash their hands in the blood of the dead of September 11, but simply because bin Laden has dared to do what even the mighty United States of America won't do: stand up to the thieves who rule the country.

Saudi Arabia today is a mess, and it is our mess. We made it the private storage tank for our oil reserves. We reaped the benefits of a steady petroleum supply at a discounted price, and we grabbed at every available Saudi petrodollar. We taught the Saudis exactly what was expected of them. We cannot walk away morally from the consequences of this behavior—and we *really* can't walk away economically. So we crow about democracy and talk about someday weaning ourselves from our dependence on foreign oil, despite the fact that as long as America has been dependent on foreign oil there has never been an honest, sustained effort at the senior governmental level to reduce long-term U.S. petroleum consumption.

Not all the wishing in the world will change the basic reality of the situation.

- Saudi Arabia controls the largest share of the world's oil and serves as the market regulator for the global petroleum industry.
- No country consumes more oil, and is more dependent on Saudi oil, than the United States.
- The United States and the rest of the industrialized world are therefore absolutely dependent on Saudi Arabia's oil reserves, and will be for decades to come.
- If the Saudi oil spigot is shut off, by terrorism or by political revolution, the effect on the global economy, and particularly on the economy of the United States, will be devastating.
- Saudi oil is controlled by an increasingly bankrupt, criminal, dysfunctional, and out-of-touch royal family that is hated by the people it rules and by the nations that surround its kingdom.

Signs of impending disaster are everywhere, but the House of Saud has chosen to pray that the moment of reckoning will not come soon—and the United States has chosen to look away. So nothing changes: the royal family continues to exhaust the Saudi treasury, buying more and more arms and funneling more and more "charity" money to the *jihad*ists, all in a desperate and self-destructive effort to protect itself.

The fact is that the West, especially the United States, has left the Saudis little choice. Leading U.S. corporations hire and rehire known Saudi crooks and known financiers of terrorism to represent their interests, so that they can land the deals that will pay the commissions back in Saudi Arabia—commissions that will further erode the budget and thus further divide the ruling class from everyone else. Former CIA directors serve on boards whose members have to hold their noses to cut deals with Saudi companies—because that's business, that's the price of entry, that's the way it's done. Ex-Presidents, former prime ministers, onetime senators and congressmen, and Cabinet members walk around with their hands out, acting as if they're doing something else but rarely slowing down, because most of them know it's an endgame too. But sometime soon, one way or another, the House of Saud is coming down.

Robert Baer served for twenty-one years with the CIA, primarily as a field officer in the Middle East. He resigned from the Agency in 1997 and was awarded its Career Intelligence Medal in 1998. This article is adapted from the forthcoming book Sleeping With the Devil *(Crown Publishers), to be published in June.*

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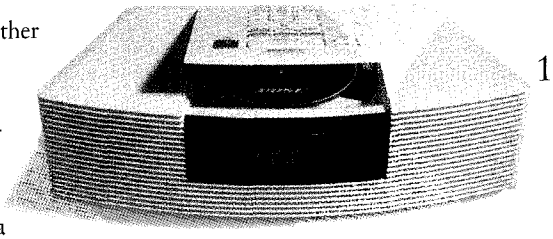

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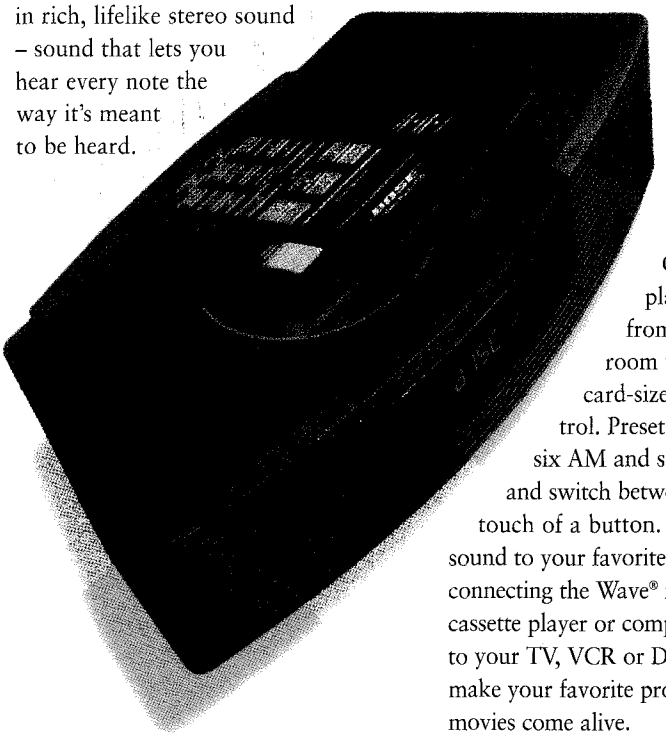

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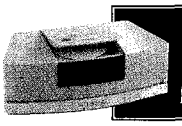

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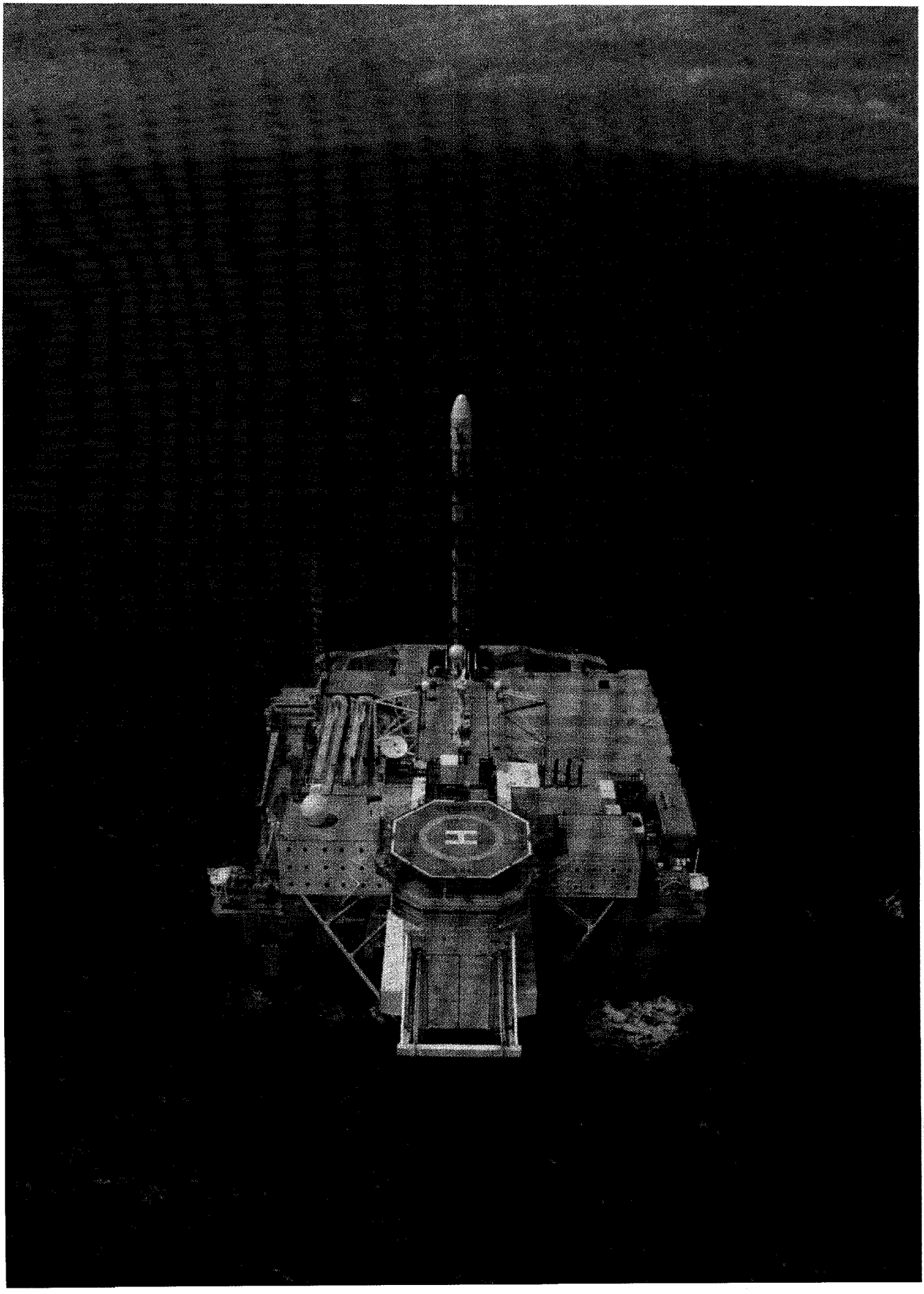

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LONG SHOT

Defying the odds, even before the recent loss of the space shuttle Columbia, *an eccentric company called Sea Launch has become the first private enterprise to send large rockets into space—from an enormous floating launch pad that sails to the Equator for blast-off. Has the era of private space travel begun?*

BY GREGG EASTERBROOK

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Everybody knows about the Kennedy Space Center, in Florida, from which the space shuttle flies. Many people know about Vandenberg Air Force Base, in central California, from which the military launches spy satellites aboard big Titan rockets originally designed to hurl nuclear bombs at the Soviet Union. But hardly anybody knows about a third spaceport in the United States, which can be found adjoining a bird sanctuary at one end of the isthmus on which the Port of Long Beach sits, just outside Los Angeles.

No government agency or military organization owns this new facility. Its heart is an enormous, otherworldly-looking vessel called the *Odyssey*—a floating launch pad, twenty stories high, built atop the same kind of floodable pillars as an oil platform. When viewed from a distance, the ship suggests the alien-designed teleportation tower in the sci-fi movie *Contact*. Intended to sail to the Equator and send into orbit an unmanned rocket that can carry as much as the space shuttle, the *Odyssey* is the operational part of the first entirely private effort to put into space entirely private large rockets carrying entirely private payloads. The ship is so large that when it came through the Suez Canal, in 1998, its owners, a company called Sea Launch, had to rent both lanes. Moored near the *Odyssey* at Long Beach is a large companion ship, the *Sea Launch Commander*. Built in Glasgow, the *Sea Launch Commander* scraped the sides of the Panama Canal on its passage from Scotland to California.

Sea Launch's core idea is a novel one; neither the National Aeronautics and Space Administration nor anybody else has tried the ocean approach to space. And it works: Sea Launch can send rockets into space more cheaply per payload pound than anything the government can offer, and those rockets place satellites *exactly* where they are supposed to go. Since its debut, in 1999, the *Odyssey* has launched seven large satellites, including the orbital broadcast towers for the new XM Satellite Radio subscription network—two multi-ton techno-marvels dubbed *Rock* and *Roll*.

Is Sea Launch an oddity or a harbinger of a new space age? With the loss of the space shuttle *Columbia*, the nation has been reminded that space flight is hazardous; and even when all goes well, NASA's current systems are absurdly expensive. Each space-shuttle launch costs some $640 million—meaning, among other things, that just the bottled water that astronauts drink on the new International Space Station costs around $400,000 a day. And good luck explaining what purpose the space station serves, other than as a jobs program for aerospace contractors and a destination to justify space-shuttle funding. Space also seems a hopelessly impractical destination, except for scientific exploration, military use, and telecommunications satellites. Most commercial ideas for space—microgravity manufacturing, for example—haven't really panned out. And history's first space tourists, two rich men who bought rides on old Soviet rockets launched from Kazakhstan in 2001 and 2002, paid about $20 million each to be crammed into a tiny capsule and subjected to agonizing G-forces at blast-off, to eat freeze-dried food and bump into floating Russians in orbit, and, finally, to come home motion sick. There's a limit to that market.

Yet in the early days of aviation, airplanes were absurdly expensive and impractical too. Budget-busting government programs dominated, and flight applications were too specialized for the typical person to care about. In 1935, when Pan Am's first Clipper took off to chase the sun across the Pacific, air travel seemed destined always to be an experience exclusively for the super-rich; in 2001 U.S. airlines alone carried 622 million passengers, including tens of millions of the working class, and even the poor. When Federal Express proposed in 1973 to move packages anywhere overnight, the idea seemed a costly extravagance best suited to big business; now average Americans routinely get shirts or CDs delivered overnight. And in 1910, when crowds gathered throughout the United States to watch the touring Blériot monoplane struggle to gain altitude, anyone who said that someday thousands of Americans would own their own airplanes for personal transportation would have been considered certifiable.

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Could space flight undergo a similar progression, morphing from a rarefied, expensive, and government-dominated activity into a mundane, affordable, and mostly private one? Some entrepreneurs think so. Sea Launch is not alone; start-up firms have spent considerable money in the past decade trying to develop cheap rockets, reusable rockets, space planes that are towed or catapulted into the sky, and even a rocket-powered helicopter that rotors up into orbit. And a few mavericks within government have been urging NASA and the Air Force (which has the world's second largest space budget) to adopt revolutionary, low-cost means of reaching orbit. So far every new idea except Sea Launch's has failed. But on the day the Wright Flyer skimmed up into the Carolina breeze, all previous attempts at flying heavier-than-air vehicles had flopped, and the whole idea of entrepreneurs doggedly pursuing the skies struck most sensible people as hilarious.

The genesis of Sea Launch came roughly a decade ago, when Boeing, which then had no rocketry division, was casting about for a way to get into the satellite-launch market. At the time, satellite customers—mainly telecommunications firms—were dissatisfied with every option available to them. American launch services relied strictly on Atlas, Delta, and Titan rockets, all of which used engineering from the late 1950s, when the rockets had been designed as intercontinental ballistic missiles. (By convention, "missile" denotes a military device, and "rocket" a civilian one; missiles are aimed at targets, and rockets are a means of flight.) Though they got the job done, the aging rockets were expensive, and their designs reflected little of what had been learned about electronics and materials in more recent years. To top it off, the manufacturers of the three rockets had fallen behind in production. The result was that in the early 1990s one had to wait a year or more to have a telecommunications satellite put into orbit.

The main international alternative to these rockets, the Ariane, built by the French company Arianespace, was experiencing its own problems. Arianes have a nasty tendency to veer off course. This means they have to be blown up, to avoid a crash, instantly reducing to glowing slag painstakingly crafted satellites that could be worth as much as $250 million apiece. The shortage of reliable launch systems in the early 1990s, coupled with the eagerness of telecom firms to put hardware into orbit, prompted the first President Bush and then President Bill Clinton to sign waivers allowing American commercial payloads to fly on Chinese rockets. The moves were ill-fated: in 1998 it was alleged that Loral Space and Communications, a U.S. defense contractor, had given China classified technology that could have been used to improve its rocket accuracy. All in all, at around the time Sea Launch was being dreamed up, anyone who could offer satellite customers a reasonably priced launch using a reliable modern rocket seemed to have a promising future.

The Soviet Union was breaking up in those days, and its engineering bureaus were winning permission to market technology for commercial use. The old Soviet system may not have been able to produce blue jeans, but it was good at rocketry. From the end of the Moon race, in the early 1970s, until the end of the USSR, the Soviet space program outlaunched America's by a wide margin, establishing a solid safety record in the process. Whereas NASA went "cost-no-object" with the shuttle, Soviet engineers concentrated on perfecting simple, affordable approaches to space flight. Soviet rocket engines became sufficiently high in quality and low in cost that today the latest version of the Atlas—a rocket originally designed to obliterate Russian cities—uses a Russian main engine that is extremely powerful, but has far fewer moving parts than the space shuttle.

The last rocket the Soviets designed before the disintegration of the USSR was called the Zenit. Though in appearance the Zenit is nothing more than a long tube, it represents the distillation of everything Moscow's engineers had learned about rockets. Its engines are enormously powerful, yet spare compared with American designs. Super-sensitive handling is not required: Zenit components can be laid on their sides and moved around by hoist. Most rockets must be treated gingerly, which adds to the handling expense. The skin of the Titan is so frail, for example, that a mechanic once caused one to explode just by dropping a tool on it from a platform. The Zenit was also designed for simplified flight: its entire launch sequence can be automated, and executed in just a few hours—no weeks of fine-tuning in the clean room, no swarms of lab-coated technicians on the gantry. (Most rockets require lengthy preparation cycles. The latest Delta, the Delta IV, needs six to eight days of prep time on the pad before flight.) Affordable, relatively simple to use: the Zenit seemed just what commercial satellite customers were looking for.

When the secrecy surrounding the Soviet space program ended, in the early 1990s, a rocket-loving faction within Boeing learned the details of the Zenit and wanted to buy some of the rockets for commercial use. But rather than bring them to the United States and contract with the Air Force for launch at Cape Canaveral (all other rockets in

No government had ever attempted a sea launch to orbit; it was considered too risky and technically daunting. But the founders of Sea Launch became determined to prove that this approach would be not only practical but also cost-cutting.

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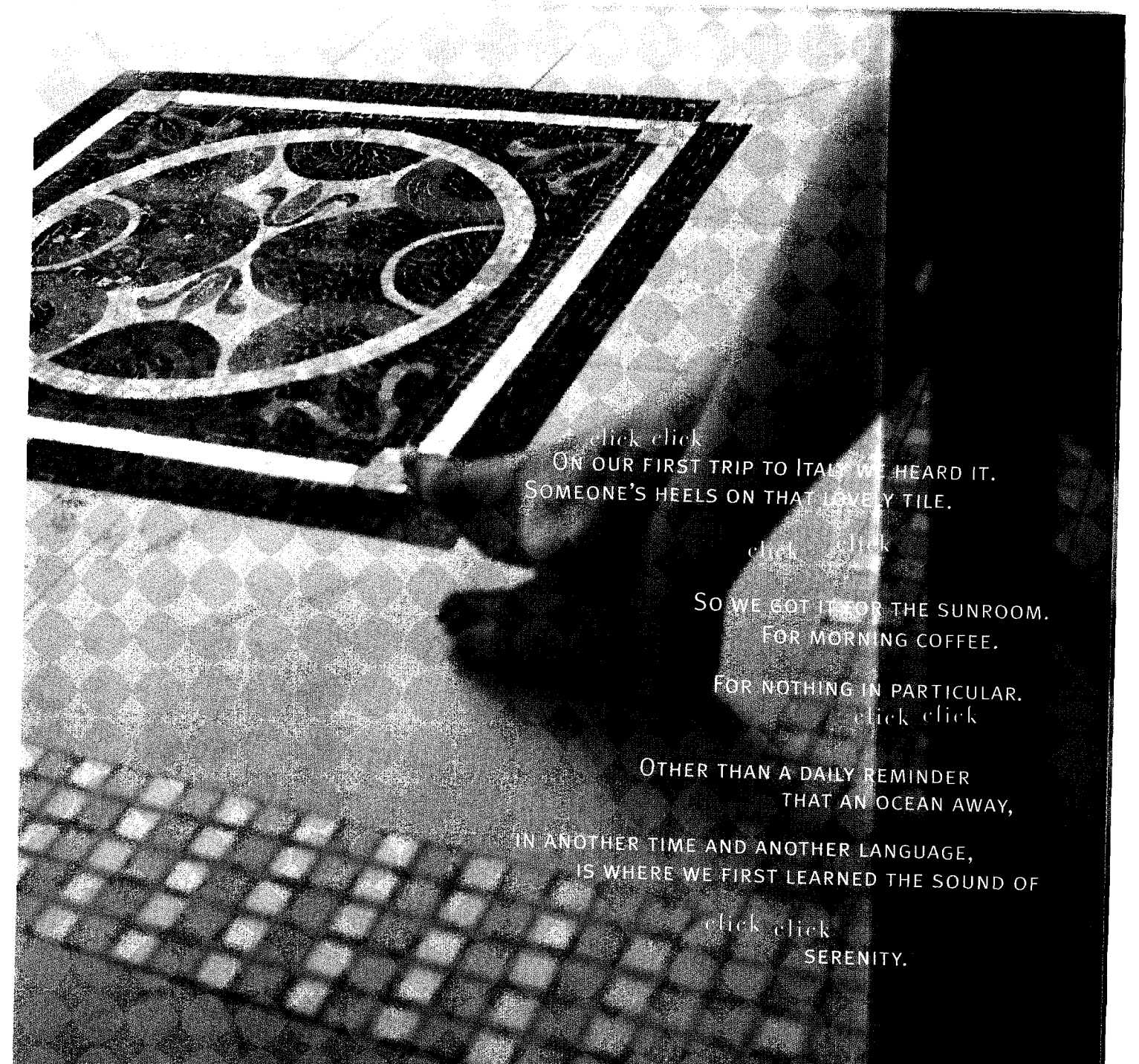

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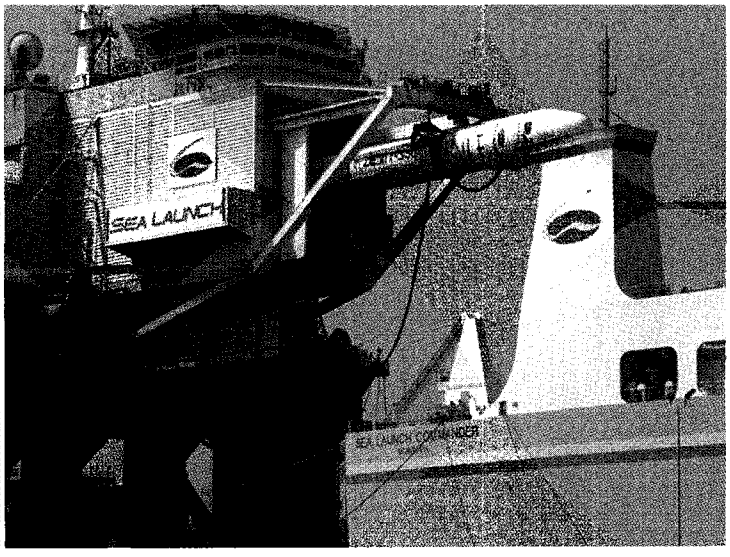
the world fly from government facilities), Boeing's rocket lovers wanted a purely private venture. That raised the question of where to launch the Zenits. At some point Valery Aliev, an engineer who had helped to design the Zenit, said, "You should launch it at the Equator, off a ship."

Rocket buffs knew what Aliev meant. Any projectile launched to the east from the Equator derives maximum benefit from Earth's rotation; the closer a rocket is to the Equator at blast-off, the more momentum it has and, therefore, the more it can carry. The Kennedy Space Center is located where it is because, of all points in the continental United States, Cape Canaveral offers one of the best combinations of low latitude and ocean to the east. Ocean to the east means "range safety"—that is, no inhabited area on which a malfunctioning rocket might fall. Arianespace built its launch center in France's quasi-territorial possession French Guiana, which has ocean to the east and is only five degrees north of the Equator. There are places exactly on the Equator where NASA or Arianespace or anyone else might build a spaceport, but doing so would entail complex negotiations with a host government. Launching from a ship would mean that one could just pick a spot in the sea along the Equator where there is no land to the east, sail there, and have an instant spaceport—no treaties required, no fees to anyone, and rocket performance boosted by nature.

No government had ever attempted a sea launch to orbit; the notion was considered too risky and technically daunting. (Ballistic nuclear missiles launched from submarines do not go into orbit but fly less challenging suborbital paths.) The people who founded Sea Launch became determined to prove that this approach would be not only practical but also cost-cutting. The company began, in 1995, as a joint venture among Boeing and the Russian and Ukrainian companies that manufacture the Zenit, along with a fourth partner, Norway's Kvaerner Group, which built and operated the two ships. (Many of the world's high-end commercial vessels have Norwegian bridge crews.) Preparations began, and Sea Launch eventually spent about a billion dollars on its ships, its home port, its testing, and its staff. Not a dime came from government.

Then, in 1997, the ground shifted: Boeing took over McDonnell Douglas and in the process acquired the Delta rocket program. The program is expensive and has insider status with the aerospace old-boy network—both NASA and the Air Force use Deltas. After the merger Boeing's top management is said to have had second thoughts about its private rocket. Executives worried that Sea Launch—a lean, unconventional operation with a focus on price-cutting—not only would steal business from the more expensive Delta rocket but also might offend NASA and the Pentagon, both important Boeing customers, by showing up the government's top-heavy space programs.



Left: launch platform Odyssey *and command ship* Sea Launch Commander *at home port. Right: loading a Zenit rocket onto* Odyssey

Following the merger, Sea Launch developed an uneasy relationship with its parent. Boeing still owns its original 40 percent of the project, but Sea Launch is pretty much on its own, even though all the world's other launch systems enjoy some form of government support and government guarantees. So although Sea Launch started with a borrowed rocket design and Boeing capital, by the time it was ready to fly, it had become an outsider organization, preparing for frontal assault on NASA and the aerospace giants. This is just what advocates of private space flight had been dreaming would happen.

Rocket parts arrive by ship at the Sea Launch home port, where they are transferred to an assembly hall aboard the *Sea Launch Commander*. The *Commander* was designed to do rocket processing anywhere, and the fact that it floats offshore—though, at home port, only inches away from California soil—eases export and union rules.

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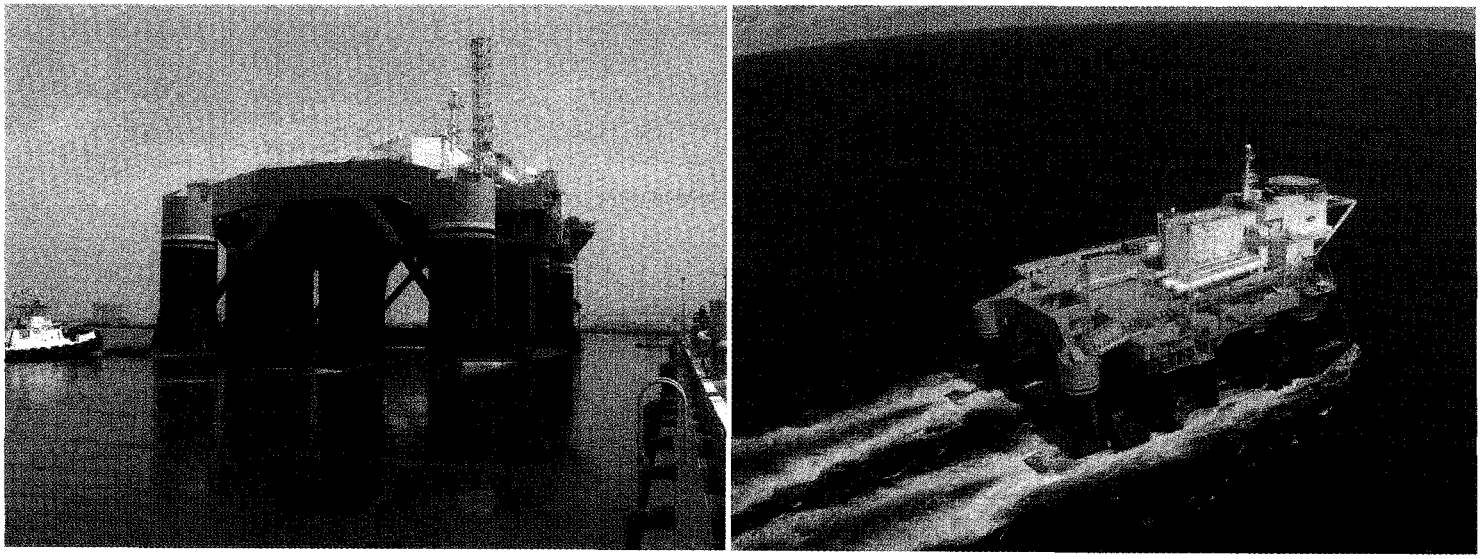
In the assembly hall of the *Commander*, Russians work on the Russian part of the system, Ukrainians work on the Ukrainian part, and only Americans are allowed to work on the satellites themselves, where the sensitive technology is found. The China scandal ultimately turned out to be a boon for Sea Launch, because President Clinton ended up banning the use of Chinese rockets by American satellite customers—eliminating one government-subsidized competitor to whom Sea Launch might have lost business. But initially, as newspapers expressed outrage over the possibility that U.S. space technology had been leaked, the State Department ordered Sea Launch shut down and the Russians and the Ukrainians left Long Beach.

The project eventually resumed, with elaborate conditions in place. Only Americans are now allowed to work with, or even to see, the payload; satellites must be sealed and rendered inaccessible before being transferred to Russian technicians, who mount them on the upper stage. Americans are supposed to keep their hands off the Russian technology. At home port Sea Launch's Eastern bloc has a separate office building, known as "the Russian embassy" (although the Ukrainians use it too). Aboard the *Commander* are Russians-only and Ukrainians-only work areas that even top American officials don't enter. After Sea Launch suffered its sole failure to date (a 2000 flight that went haywire attempting to put into orbit a communications satellite called ICO-F1), the company had to obtain a special federal license for American and Russian experts to exchange technical data while figuring out what went wrong.

Once a rocket is assembled on the *Commander*, it is transferred to the *Odyssey*, which then departs for a long sail to a point on the Equator about 1,400 miles south of Hawaii. The *Odyssey*'s destination is the Pacific doldrums, where the waters are usually flat, the winds are usually light, and lightning is rare. It's a place with no shipping lanes and nothing but open ocean for hundreds of miles to the east. At the Kennedy Space Center thrill seekers in boats and private planes often populate the downrange area, where a malfunctioning rocket can become a menace; Coast Guard crews and other range-safety personnel number in the many dozens during launches. But Sea Launch need not worry about some idiot in a Cessna 172 buzzing the liftoff path. An hour before launch the *Commander*'s helicopter sweeps the downrange zone. Pilots have never seen anything but ocean.

Three days after the *Odyssey* sets sail, most of the company's personnel board the *Commander* and catch up with its slower sister ship. Crew members on the two ships combined number 310—most of the staff of the Sea Launch enterprise, except for the security guards, business managers, and secretaries minding the home port. This is a tiny staff, relatively speaking: Ariane, Atlas, and Delta launches each require about 1,000 people. The Russians and the Ukrainians on the Sea Launch staff earn much less than the Americans, and so tend to view their time on the ship as luxurious—the food is free, the chefs boast of preparing restaurant-quality meals, and drinks cost a dollar. Most of the crew members are male. Typically, one or two executives from the company whose satellite is being launched come along, and for them there are VIP staterooms. A State Department official also travels with the crew. One of the official's tasks is to monitor compliance with each launch's export license, because as far as federal law is concerned, the technology on anything bound for outer space is being exported.

When the launch destination is reached, after a journey of approximately eleven days, the *Odyssey* takes on seawater in order to lower itself in the waves and become stable. A temporary bridge links the vessels, and personnel shuttle back and forth; both ships have underwater "thrusters" that



Left: Odyssey *leaving home port. Right: steaming toward the launch site, a point on the Equator about 1,400 miles south of Hawaii*

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allow them to stay almost motionless in fair seas. The *Commander* sports two complete control rooms side by side: one has computers that operate in English and is laid out to resemble NASA's Mission Control, in Houston; the other has computers that operate in Russian and is laid out to resemble the old Soviet space-program stronghold, at Baikonur. The Russian control room manages the rocket, the American room the spacecraft. The Americans, being the lead investors, have final say.

Much of the time at the Equator the rocket is still lying on its side in a protective building atop the launch ship. The day before blast-off, in the quick, hands-free prep of which the Zenit's designers are so proud, an automated system rolls the rocket out and sets it upright. Five hours before the launch everyone leaves the *Odyssey*, the *Commander* pulls away to a three-mile distance, and the automated system fuels the tanks. At ignition this very powerful machine—it has 1.6 million pounds of liftoff thrust, far more than earlier rockets of the same size—climbs up from the pad so quickly that the *Odyssey* bears few scorch marks.

Most commercial satellites are bound for geostationary orbit, 22,300 miles above the Equator. In this orbit an object hangs the same distance from Earth as Earth is around; the effect is that the satellite moves at a pace matching Earth's rotation, and therefore remains over the same point. (An alternative is "sun synchronous" positioning, which Sea Launch doesn't offer, in which a satellite mimics the apparent movement of the sun.) Sea Launch's fabulous accuracy when "injecting" to high orbits is a selling point, because a satellite in exactly the correct orbit will perform better and last longer. All Sea Launch flights have deposited the payload within a few meters of the ideal point; the Ariane and other rockets have sometimes missed by hefty margins.

When a high orbit is the destination, several short burns in a rocket's final stage are more accurate than one long firing, so the Zenit uses a stop-start motor, the most complicated kind of rocket engine, in its final stage. Control of the final stage is necessary for hours, because high orbit is reached in phases rather than all at once. The *Commander*'s huge antenna, a seaborne tracking station, is employed for this task. When the *Commander* is moored at home port, Russian personnel have been known to use the antenna to chatter with orbiting cosmonauts. The subject of discussion has sometimes been whether Sea Launch has job openings.

As the satellite ascends to its final orbit, usually over several weeks, the vessels sail back toward Long Beach, with the customer executives sometimes departing as soon as the ships are within helicopter range of the nearest place to catch a flight to Hawaii. The *Commander* is designed to carry a second Zenit, which could be transferred to the *Odyssey* in mid-ocean for another launch before returning to port; system planners wanted the ability to put a lot of satellites into orbit fast. But in the current slack market it's back to Long Beach and months of downtime until the next payload. Most of the Russians and Ukrainians are sent home between missions, because paying their passage back to the motherland costs less than putting them up in California.

Sea Launch was the only wholly private rocket venture to become operational during the 1990s, but this wasn't for want of trying by others; the decade witnessed a private rocket-research boom. Until the loss in 1986 of the shuttle *Challenger*, NASA had essentially held a legal monopoly on commercial satellite launches within the United States. In the aftermath of the *Challenger* calamity, however, President Ronald Reagan signed orders banning commercial payloads aboard the shuttle and appealed to industry to compete against NASA. Space-launch research, stagnant since the end of the Moon race (the United States had not flown a new kind of rocket since the Saturn V moon rocket, which first went aloft in 1967), was revved up.

Then, in the 1990s, came forecasts of fantastic growth in the satellite industry. The burgeoning demand for portable phones was going to be addressed by "constellations" of hundreds of low-altitude repeater satellites, operated by companies with names like Iridium, Teledesic, and Globalstar. Venture capitalists spoke of private launch companies that would fire a rocket to orbit every day and of "space planes" that would travel back and forth in such numbers that space tourism might become, if not common, frequent enough to be unremarkable.

Believing that private space launching would be the next great technology growth sector, numerous start-up firms opened their doors, each promising a different idea for launch engineering—from supercheap throwaway boosters to the rocket-accelerated helicopter. A company called Orbital Sciences designed a mini-rocket, dropped from beneath the belly of a plane, that can carry mini-satellites into orbit; in 1990 that mini-rocket, the Pegasus, became the first privately developed object to fly to space. (Because the Pegasus can handle only little payloads, purists don't put Orbital Sciences in a class with Sea Launch.) A wealthy Dallas banker named Andrew Beal sank more than $100 million of his own money into a private attempt to build a simple but powerful throwaway rocket that would cost half as much per pound launched as the least expensive existing system. Beal Aerospace hired about 200 people, built an office complex, and got as far as the "static" firing, on a test stand, of the largest privately designed rocket motor ever to ignite. The rocket motor worked fine, but Beal Aerospace did not. The company closed its doors in late 2000.

Another important start-up was Kistler Aerospace. Based near Seattle's tech wonderland and backed by the cell-phone baron John McCaw, Kistler is said to have raised about $500 million by 2001, more capital than any of the other pure start-ups. Kistler's plan was to build the world's first fully reusable rocket, powered by inexpensive, reliable Russian engines. The stages of the rocket, after dropping

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off, would float back to Earth on a parachute and, at the last second, deploy a giant cushion for landing. The rocket's ascent path would be manipulated so that the stages would float back close to the launch point, not hundreds of miles downrange. Kistler hired lots of engineers, burned through lots of money, and broke ground on a spaceport in Woomera, Australia, a location near the Equator. But no launch was ever attempted. A remnant of the company still exists, and continues to promise the first blast-off of a totally reusable rocket.

During the 1990s many entrepreneurs also became enamored of the prospect of a space plane—that is, a winged flying machine that would ascend to orbit in level flight, gradually building up speed, rather than roaring straight skyward. The idea wasn't new: the United States had developed a prototype, called the X-15, at the beginning of the space race. It was a small, one-person winged aircraft that was carried aloft by a B-52. Released at the bomber's maximum altitude, the X-15 would fire a rocket engine and rise as high as sixty-seven miles (commercial aircraft cruise at around five miles), which is the boundary of the atmosphere, before returning to land at an airfield under the pilot's control. From its debut, in 1959, to 1968 the X-15 flew to the edge of outer space almost 200 times, with only one crash—a remarkable feat considering that the entire project was undertaken before pocket calculators were in stores.

The X-15 and related space-plane projects were canceled in 1967, and during the Nixon Administration both NASA and the Air Force committed themselves to using only the space shuttle for future launches. To this day space buffs are driven to distraction by the thought that the United States had a functioning space plane *almost half a century ago*—albeit one not powerful enough to achieve orbit—yet abandoned research into this comparatively low-cost idea in order to focus on the very expensive space shuttle. A space plane is an attractive idea for other reasons besides cost: it might take off from anywhere and return to anywhere, and its relatively gradual acceleration could mean a smooth ride that a healthy person could bear without months of astronaut training. Such characteristics made space planes sound like airplanes, at least to entrepreneurs—and since building and flying airplanes is a successful private industry, perhaps this was the model that would make space flight profitable.

Start-up firms researched space planes that would be towed into the sky by a 747 for air launch; that would take off with regular jet engines and then receive in-flight fueling with rocket propellants from a tanker aircraft; that would rise off runways on the backs of mammoth carrier aircraft, in a grand update on the X-15; and that would have lasers beam them energy as they flew, to heat special chemical fuels. The most ambitious design came from a start-up called Andrews Space & Technology, which proposed a space plane that would take off on the back of a giant carrier aircraft, without any liquid oxygen for its rocket engines. As the tandem gained altitude, a system aboard the carrier aircraft would manufacture liquid oxygen out of the air. Thus the space plane would not reach full takeoff mass until it was already 30,000 feet up and moving at 500 miles per hour. Andrews has no prototype yet, but it does have $3 million in NASA funding to study the idea. Private-rocketry advocates who speak of a revolutionary overthrow of the space status quo have, like the big aerospace "primes," found that it's a lot easier to stay in business with government contracts.

A watershed moment for the independent space start-ups came in 1999, when a space helicopter called the Roton flew. One would be hard put to come up with a goofier idea than a helicopter bound for orbit, but that's what the Roton (as much as it sounds like the star of a Japanese monster movie) was to be. The original idea was this: A gumdrop-shaped spacecraft would hang underneath four rotor blades. At the end of each blade would be a rocket motor. The rockets would fire sideways, accelerating the blades to unheard-of revolutions per minute; the spinning motion itself would pump out the rocket fuel, avoiding the expense and weight of the complicated turbo-compressors that are key items on the space shuttle's main engines. Up toward space the Roton would flutter, churning through the air. As the atmosphere thinned, the rockets would swivel downward for regular firing. (Above the atmosphere a little thrust goes a long way.) On the return from space the rotors would provide braking power, so that the Roton could soft-land exactly where it took off, allowing immediate refitting for the next flight.

Sea Launch Commander sports two control rooms: one has computers that operate in English and resembles Mission Control; the other has computers that operate in Russian and resembles the Soviet space-program stronghold, at Baikonur.

The helicopter approach turned out not to be practical for launching the Roton, but it was designed to be used for landing. True space believers loved the Roton, because it was technology the aerospace establishment laughed at (*They laughed at the Wright brothers! They laughed at Montgolfier!*) and because the company that made it, Rotary Rocket, was run by Gary Hudson, one of the first public advocates of private rocket development. Around 2,000 people attended the Roton rollout, in 1999, at an airfield in Mojave, California, from entrepreneurs to space groupies to the science-fiction writer Jerry Pournelle, a NASA critic who

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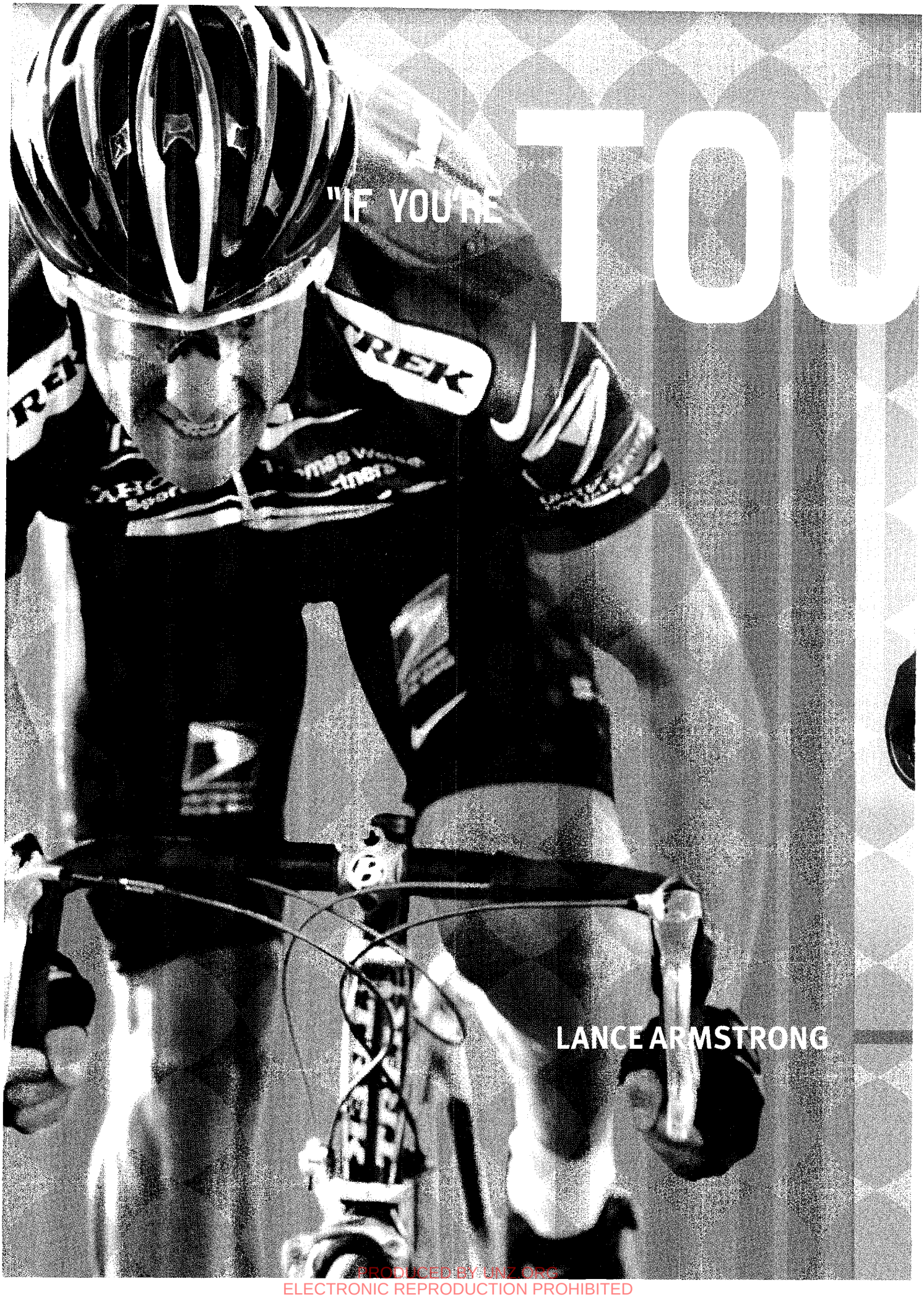

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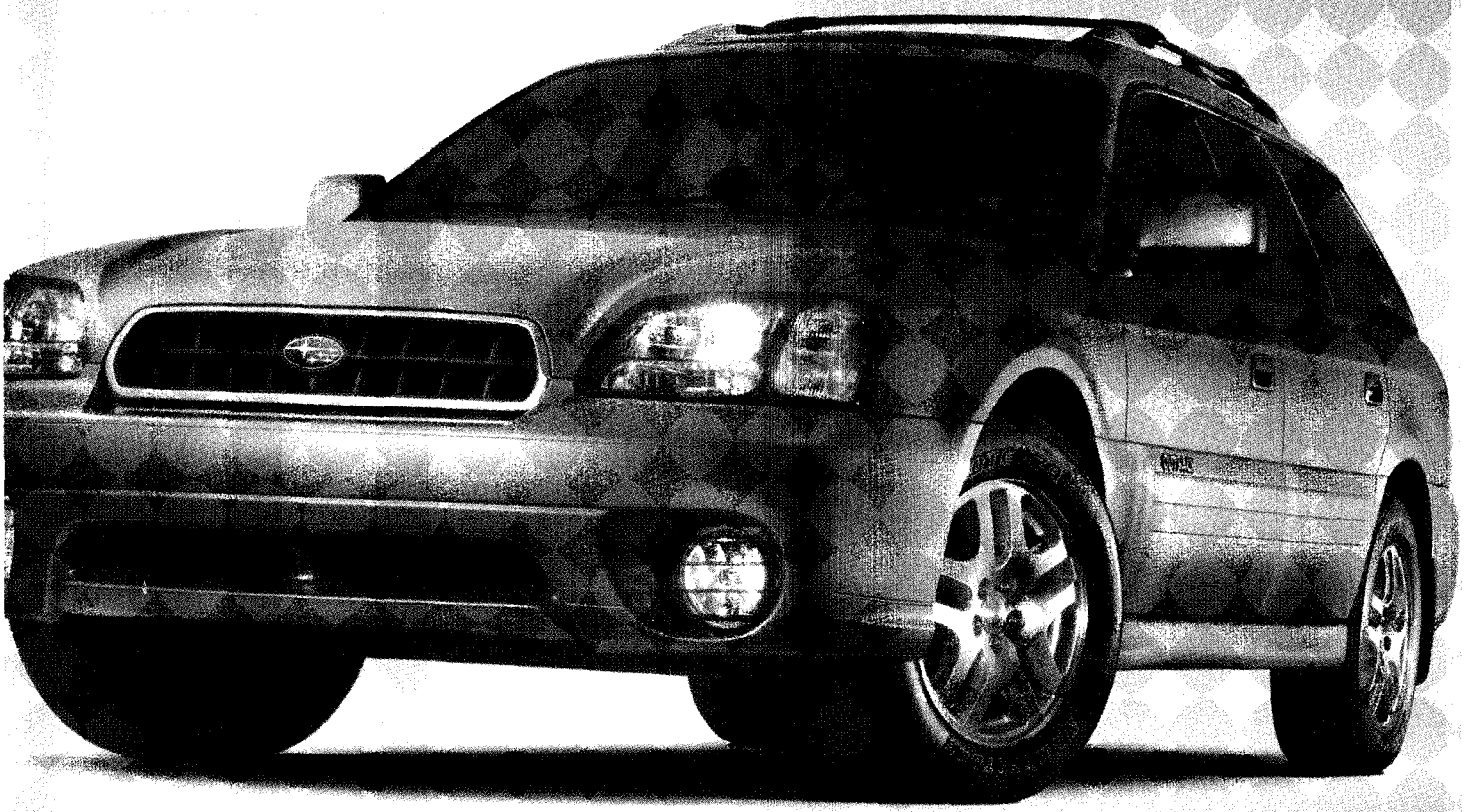

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somehow got the ear of Vice President Dan Quayle during the first Bush Administration. Out of a hangar came the weird rotor-topped spaceship, built at a cost of about $5 million. Later, at the first launch, gases hissed, up into the air the Roton went, and then it landed as a helicopter. They laughed at Montgolfier!

The Roton prototype never got above a few hundred feet, but Hudson beams with pride about what he accomplished. "Five million dollars is what the primes spend on paint for their prototypes," he says. "For that amount I did the basic design of an all-new concept, put a working test vehicle into the air with a pilot, and brought him back safely. It's true that private space entrepreneurs haven't done much compared to the big boys, but we haven't had access to even a tiny fraction of their capital. Give me ten percent of what the primes have and I will clean their clocks."

That said, Roton, Beal, Kistler, and the rest have all either folded or gone into hibernation. Why? Part of the answer is cell phones. Iridium and other space-based telecommunications companies that were going to put triple-digit numbers of satellites into orbit instead fizzled out—bested by the humdrum earthbound technology of repeaters mounted on poles and arranged to broadcast in cells. When the cheap cell phone appeared, demand for rocket-launch services collapsed. Today the average number of annual space launches is little different from what it was in the 1960s; the huge market in commercial space launches simply hasn't emerged. Most investors have withdrawn their capital from the start-ups. Space hope springs eternal, though: the entrepreneur Elon Musk, who became wealthy when he sold his creation PayPal to eBay last fall, just announced a new company called SpaceX, whose goal is an entirely private rocket much cheaper than any in existence today.

And although the start-ups had ambition and dreams, none ever had enough capital in the first place. Andy Beal's conviction that he could get a large rocket, even a simplified one, flying for $100 million was an illusion; the development of auto models has cost more. It took $2 billion to $3 billion to develop the 777 airliner—a plane that flies between airports using well-established technology. Given that, how can private space-plane developers seriously expect to perfect a machine, for less than many billions of dollars, that reaches orbit using all-new technology? As long as demand for space launches is relatively modest, capitalists will have little reason to put up the huge sums required for a revolutionary rocket or space plane—even if the result might ultimately be cheaper to operate and better than anything existing today.

Sea Launch, at least, is flying, and its hope of survival is price. Right now the company is offering to put about six tons into geostationary orbit for about $65–70 million. This is loss-leader pricing; the company wants to charge more but can't in the current market. But consider that a space-shuttle mission costs about ten times as much as a Sea Launch flight, yet carries a comparable payload. This is why the space establishment, with thousands of jobs and more than $4 billion in annual spending tied to the shuttle program, is not happy about Sea Launch.

According to Marco Caceres, an analyst for the space consulting organization Teal Group, Sea Launch's competitors are asking significantly more per payload pound to high orbit than Sea Launch. And despite the fate of its fellow start-ups, Sea Launch has competitors in spades. Lockheed Martin offers three versions of the Atlas rocket, including the Atlas V. Lockheed also sells launches aboard the Proton, a workhorse of the old Soviet space program. Boeing offers three Delta models, including the new Delta IV, sporting the first all-new U.S. rocket-engine design in some thirty years. Arianespace offers two models of the Ariane. A Russian firm also sells launches on the Soyuz, a rocket barely changed from the one that made Yuri Gagarin the first person in space, four decades ago. Japan's rocket program, though troubled by launch failures, continues to solicit customers. China hopes to regain position in the commercial launch business; India recently entered it, and Brazil hopes to enter. There are even companies offering surplus U.S. or Soviet ICBMs converted to launch small payloads into space.

If Sea Launch charges less than many of these companies, how can they stay in business? The explanation is that everybody else has government contracts, and governments don't necessarily drive hard bargains. Space launching for NASA and the military is "a very stable, good-margin business," Albert Smith, the executive vice-president of the Lockheed Martin division that operates the Atlas rocket, told the industry publication *Aviation Week and Space Technology* in 2001. Boeing's Delta IV and Lockheed's Atlas V received a total of about $1 billion in Air Force development funding, and each company was guaranteed Air Force use. Arianespace is guaranteed all French government launches and conducts most of the launches of the European Space Agency. The Chinese, Japanese, and Indian rocket programs are anchored in government money. Sea Launch's lower overhead means it can hang in, but as a true free-market project competing against projects with extensive government backing, it has a tenuous existence.

Many in the aerospace business are quietly rooting for Sea Launch to fail, so that its innovations and affordability will stop providing uncomfortable comparisons with "good margin" government projects. The situation is especially awkward for Boeing, which now offers customers both the privately developed, low-cost, and ready-to-fly Sea Launch system and the tax-subsidized, higher-cost, years-behind-schedule Delta IV. The old boys worry that Sea Launch, or any start-up that succeeds, will kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. The last thing big aerospace contractors want is to set in motion price cuts in government work.

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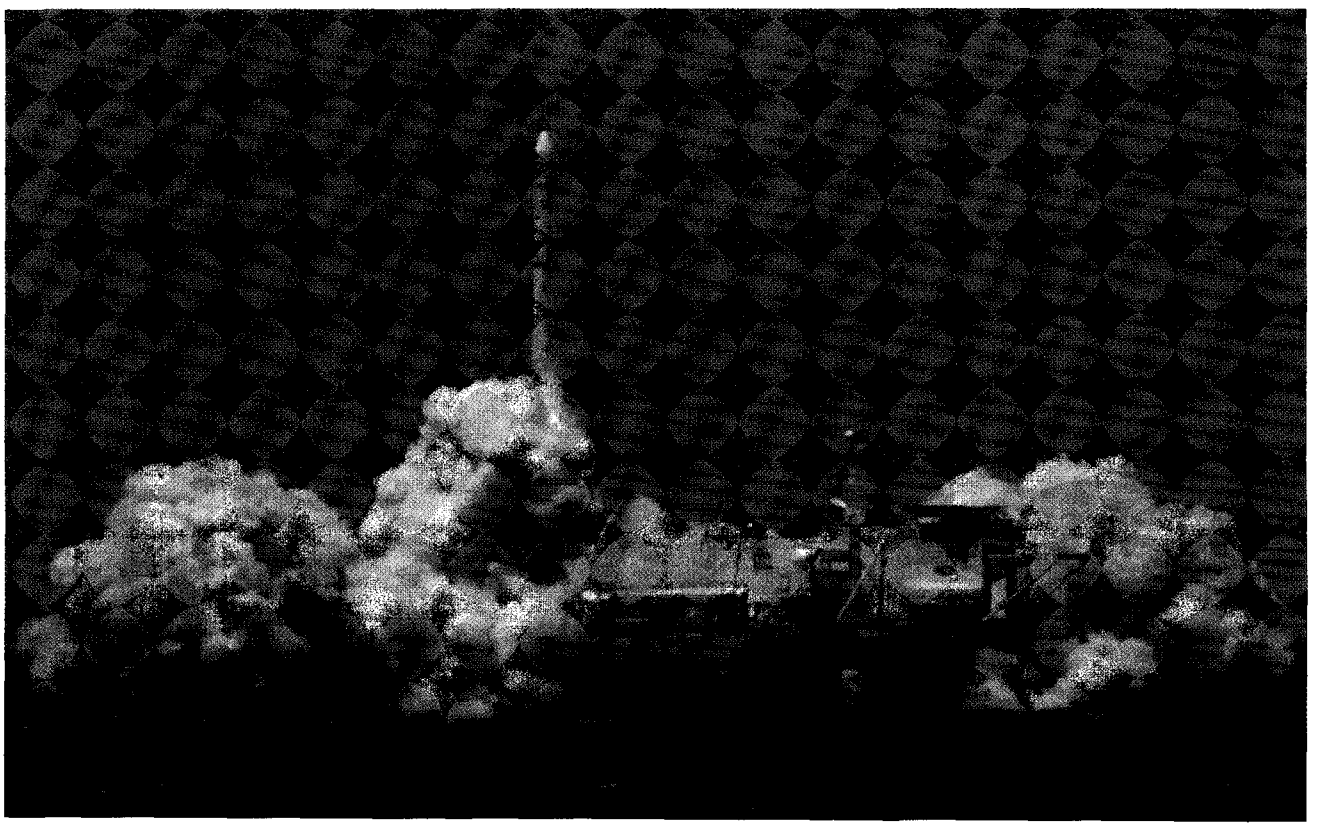
"Reach low orbit, and you're halfway to anywhere in the solar system," the writer Robert Heinlein once supposed, and from the standpoint of propulsion he was correct: the power required to go the first 200 miles up from the ground to orbit is about the same, per pound moved, as that required to traverse the next 50 million miles to Mars. But the price of that initial launch remains so high that the rest of the solar system might as well be light-years distant. Talk of returning to the Moon, or of people's exploring Mars, or of protecting Earth against extinction-causing asteroid strikes, will remain whimsy until someone figures out a much less expensive means of putting pounds into space.

Rocket lovers continue dreaming nonetheless, sure that the breakthrough must someday come. They foresee going back to the Moon in numbers, to establish laboratories or asteroid-watch stations or even defensive fortifications against alien attack. Space tourism as a commonplace event is viewed in these circles as a question of when, not if. Mars is a particular obsession. For years a group of astrophysicists, rocket lovers, sci-fi writers, and space buffs held a Case for Mars conference, advocating a grand adventure to the Red Planet. (I once attended a Case for Mars conference and can report that they didn't talk much about launch cost.) Space-buff Web sites tout, among other things, fusion-driven scramjets, antimatter power, and "zero point energy" propulsion based on quantum fluctuations in subatomic particles. Hey, and what about a skyhook? In theory a heavy counterweight could be put in orbit and then used to lower a hook to Earth's surface. Giant solar collectors floating in space could produce electricity to run winches that would pull up the skyhook, allowing access to orbit by means of a very spooky but low-cost elevator ride. Once we built a skyhook, we'd be halfway to any destination in the solar system.

Meanwhile, Sea Launch readies its private rockets to make the long journey to the Pacific doldrums. Out on those flat seas there are few natural sounds. People standing on the deck of the *Sea Launch Commander* can hear the clanking noises of the automated rocket-erection devices on the launch ship miles away, and the hissing of the propellants as they load. Then the sound changes from distant, muffled reverberations to the earsplitting roar of blast-off.



In a single instant more energy is unleashed above the *Odyssey* launch pad than the entire medieval world used in a year. The rocket arcs upward on blinding flame, and in a moment the light vanishes from sight. A pop-music satellite goes into orbit, a small accomplishment in the scheme of things, and two ships sail back to port, their crews hoping that more business awaits them.

Will such private access to space someday be a part of everyday life? Or will space always be inaccessibly far off and expensive for most people? The private rocketeers of Sea Launch can only wonder as they watch their rocket disappear into the infinite darkness of space.

Gregg Easterbrook is a contributing editor of The Atlantic, *a senior editor of* The New Republic, *and a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution. His most recent book, a novel, is* The Here and Now *(2002).*

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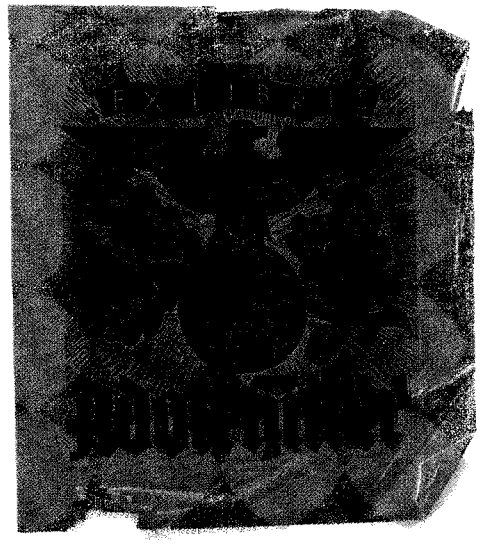
HITLER'S FORGOTTEN LIBRARY:

THE MAN, HIS BOOKS, AND HIS SEARCH FOR GOD

You can tell a lot about a person from what he reads. The surviving—and largely ignored—remnants of Adolf Hitler's personal library reveal a deep but erratic interest in religion and theology

BY TIMOTHY W. RYBACK



"Did you know that today is Hitler's birthday?" the attendant said as he handed me Adolf Hitler's personal copy of *Mein Kampf*, a tattered red-leather volume (a special second edition issued in 1926) with the title and author's name embossed in gold on the spine. The young man, clean-cut and dressed in a sweatshirt bearing the skull and crossbones of the Curry College Rugby Football Club, explained that he knew this fact only because his sister shared a birthday with the Nazi leader. "You remember something like that," he said.

On this particular Friday (April 20, 2001, Adolf Hitler's 112th birthday) the rare-book reading room of the Library of Congress—a high-ceilinged space elegantly appointed with brass lamps, heavy wooden tables, and thick carpet—hummed with subdued activity. At one table a heavy-set woman in a bright paisley blouse wore white gauze gloves to leaf through a fragile tome titled *Histoire Aéronautique*, a collection of quaint eighteenth-century lithographs depicting aeronauts in powdered wigs transported aloft by fanciful pneumatic contraptions. A smartly dressed black woman with cropped hair and large hoop earrings studied a book on slavery in Barbados. Across from her a stocky man with a laptop clattered away as he typed extracts from a book cradled in a velvet-lined wooden stand. At another table a young man in a suit stared into an oversized volume of black-and-white photographs of graphic sex—leather, chains, sprawled limbs—with SEX embossed on the silver-metal cover.

The rare-book collection is home to more than 800,000 volumes. It contains the personal libraries of Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson, and first editions of contemporary "authors" such as Andy Warhol and Madonna. It is also home to the remnants of the private library of Adolf Hitler, a man better known for burning books than for collecting them.

The books that constitute the Hitler Library were discovered in a salt mine near Berchtesgaden—haphazardly stashed in schnapps crates with the Reich Chancellery address on them—by soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division in the spring of 1945. After a lengthy initial evaluation at the U.S. military "collecting point" in Munich the books, numbering 3,000, were shipped to the United States and transferred in January of 1952 to the Library of Congress, where an intern was assigned to uncrate the collection. "The intern did what we call 'duping out,'" says David Moore, a German-acquisition assistant at the Library of Congress. "If a book was not one hundred percent sure, if there was no bookplate, no inscription to the Führer, he didn't keep it." According to Moore, duplicate copies were sent to the exchange-and-gift division and then either went to other libraries or found their way onto the open market; the non-duplicate books that could not be fully authenticated were absorbed into the Library of Congress's general collection.

The 1,200 volumes that survived the "duping out" joined the rare-book collection on the third floor of the Jefferson Building, where they were unceremoniously identified by a large cardboard sign—dangling on a string from a ceiling pipe—that read, "Hitler Library. This bay only. Please replace books to proper location."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WALTER SMALLING

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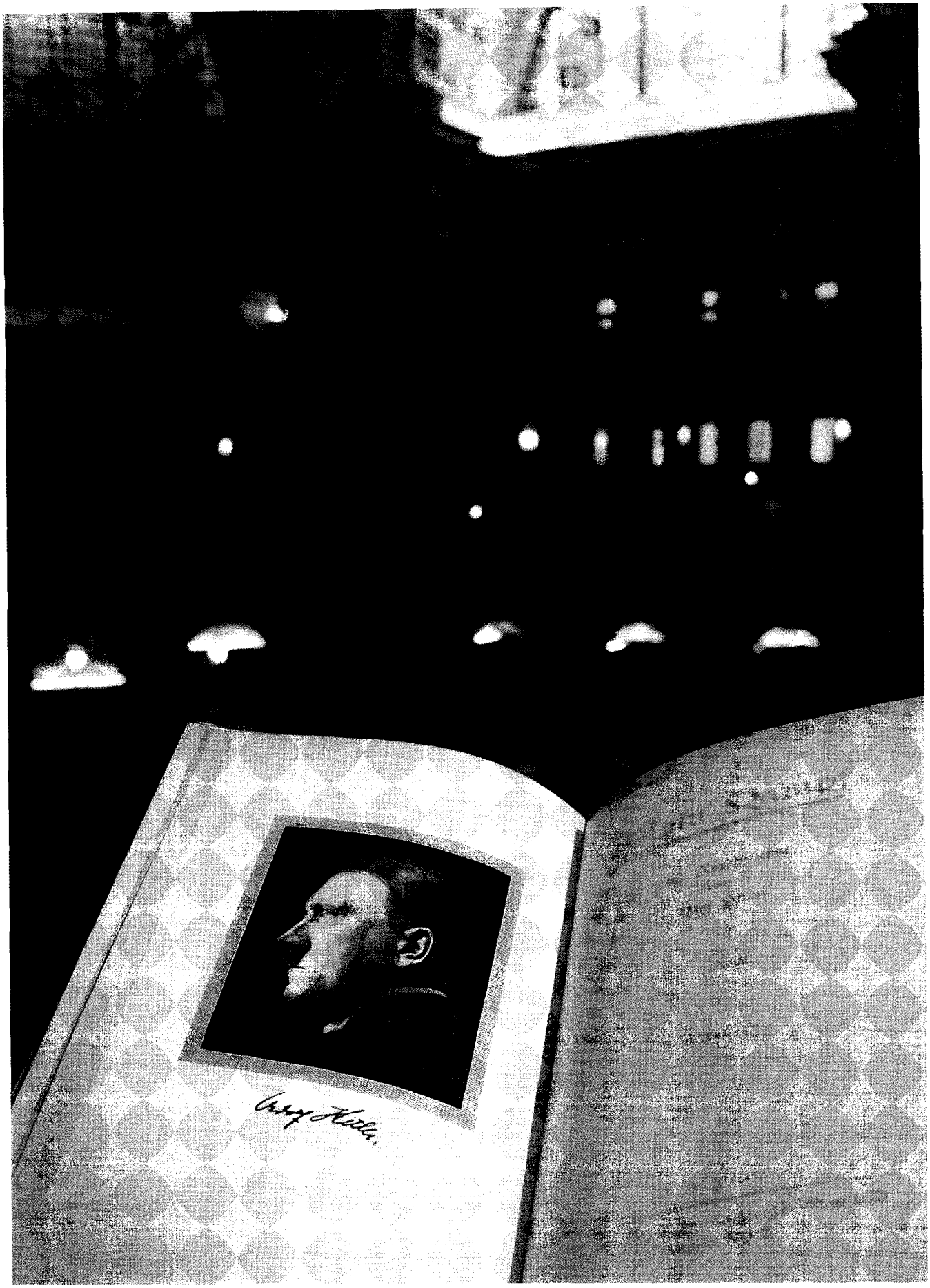

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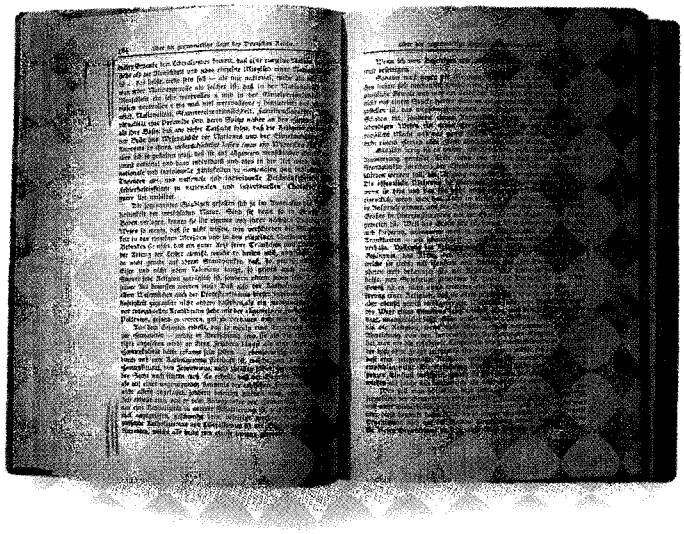
The sign has since been removed, the books relocated several times, and the collection euphemistically renamed the Third Reich Collection. The books can be ordered, five at a time, from the main desk in the rare-book reading room. When I first visited the collection, in April of 2001, fewer than half of the 1,200 books had Library of Congress numbers, and only 200 of those were listed in the online catalogue; the remaining thousand titles were listed alphabetically by author on yellowing cards in an old-fashioned wooden card catalogue, many still identified by the provisional numbers assigned them in the early 1950s. Jerry Wager, the head of the rare-book reading room, told me at the time, "Processing this collection has not been a high priority for us"; he also said that the books had been relocated yet again in recent months. "We routinely move collections to make better use of existing space and to accommodate new acquisitions," he said. A genteel man in his mid-fifties with a flawlessly manicured white beard, Wager is a master of discretion. When I asked about the Hitler collection's new location, he replied, "For security reasons we don't reveal where collections are located in the vault." He is equally circumspect about scholars who have previously studied the collection, simply noting that the books are requested only a few times each year, and generally by people looking for specific volumes rather than for an opportunity to study the collection as a whole.



Hitler's marginalia in Paul de Lagarde's German Essays

Why, with hundreds of Hitler biographies, had not more scholars visited the Third Reich Collection? It is referenced by none of the leading Hitler biographers—not Alan Bullock, not John Toland, not Joachim Fest. Ian Kershaw, whose recent two-volume Hitler biography has won international acclaim, told me in the summer of 2001 that he visited the collection once, in the early 1990s, but "decided against any consultation of the volumes in it, and in the event did not refer directly, so far as I recall, to the collection in my biography." In retrospect, Kershaw concedes, he should probably have at least mentioned the collection in a footnote.

Scholarly neglect of the Hitler Library derives in good part from an early misperception that its historical or biographical importance was limited. "Spotchecks revealed little in the way of marginal notes, autographs, or other similar features of interest," an internal Library of Congress review determined in January of 1952. "Indeed, it seems that most of the books have never been perused by their owner." Gerhard Weinberg, a leading authority on the Nazi era and one of the first scholars to explore the collection, confirms this initial assessment. "I was a newly minted Ph.D., and this was my first job beyond graduate school," Weinberg told me not long ago. "I was compiling information for the *Guide to Captured German War Documents*. The books had only recently been uncrated, and I was intrigued by what I would find there." To Weinberg's disappointment, the Hitler Library appeared to consist mostly of presentation copies from authors or publishers. "There were few clues that many of these books had been part of his personal library, and even less evidence that he had read any of them," Weinberg says.

In 2000 Philipp Gassert and Daniel Mattern reached a similar conclusion. Beginning in 1995 Gassert, an assistant professor of history at the University of Heidelberg, and Mattern, the senior editor at the German Historical Institute, in Washington, D.C., systematically reviewed every volume in the collection. In the spring of 2001 Greenwood Press published the results of their research, *The Hitler Library*, a 550-page bibliography that lists each book alphabetically, with its author, page count, and call number. Also included are transcriptions of all handwritten dedications, some brief descriptions of marginalia, and an indication of which books contain the Führer's bookplate—an eagle, a swastika, and oak branches between the words EX LIBRIS and ADOLF HITLER.

The Hitler Library provides the first comprehensive road map through the collection, but at times it leads readers astray.

Most significant is overlooked marginalia. In one reference Mattern and Gassert note correctly that the Hitler Library contains two identical copies of Paul de Lagarde's *German Essays*, but they don't mention marginalia, despite the fact that in one volume fifty-eight pages have penciled intrusions—the first on page 16, the last on page 370. Given that Lagarde belongs to a circle of nineteenth-century German nationalist writers who are believed to have had a formative influence on Hitler's anti-Semitism, the marked passages are certainly worth noting. In an essay called "The Current Tasks of German Politics," Lagarde anticipates the emergence of a "singular man with the abilities and energy" to unite the German peoples, and calls for the "relocation of the Polish and Austrian Jews to Palestine." This latter phrase has been underlined and flagged with two bold strikes in the margin.

Sometimes writing along the side of a page is recognizably in Hitler's jagged cursive hand. For the most part,

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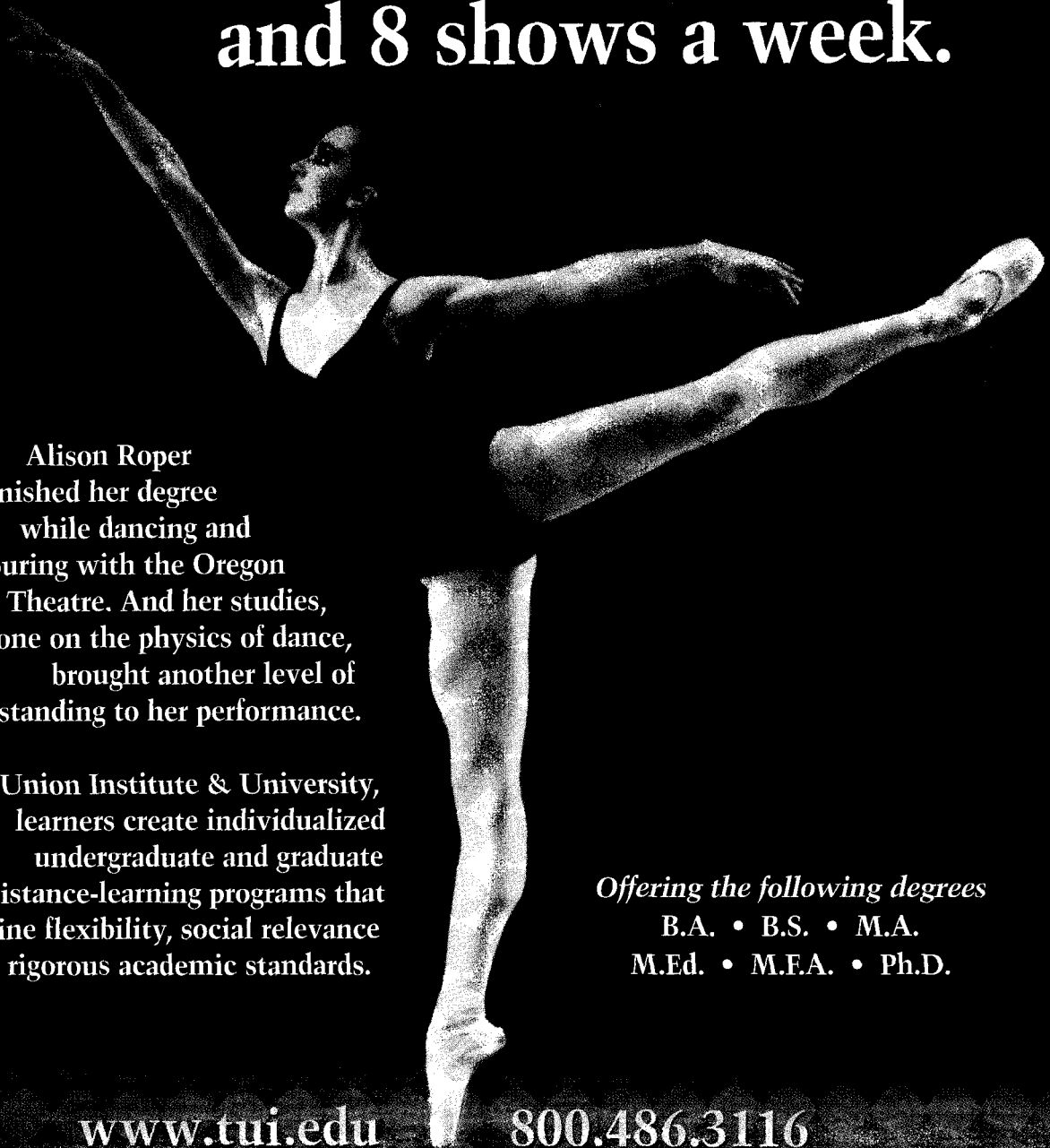
Alison's classroom has 3000 seats, a 60 piece orchestra, and 8 shows a week.



Alison Roper finished her degree while dancing and touring with the Oregon Ballet Theatre. And her studies, one on the physics of dance, brought another level of understanding to her performance.

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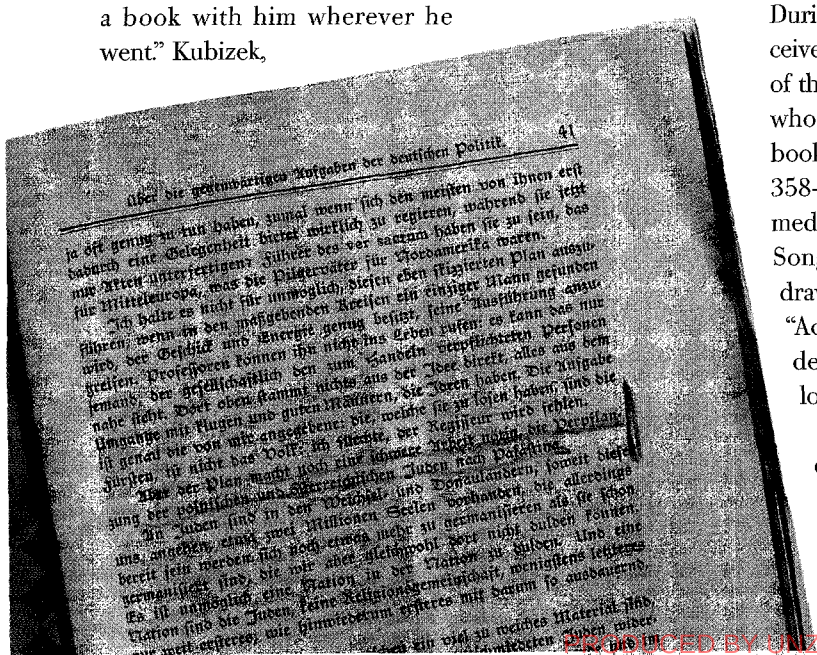
though, the marginalia are restricted to simple markings whose common "authorship" is suggested by an intense vertical line in the margin and double or triple underlining in the text, always in pencil; I found such markings repeatedly both in the Library of Congress collection and in a cache of eighty Hitler books at Brown University. Hitler's handwritten speeches, preserved in the Federal German Archives, show an identical pattern of markings. In one anti-Semitic rant Hitler drew three lines under the words *Klassenkampf* ("class struggle"), *Weltherrschaft* ("world domination"), and *Der Jude als Diktator* ("the Jew as dictator"); one can almost hear his fevered tones.

Hitler's habit of highlighting key concepts and passages is consonant with his theory on the "art of reading." In Chapter Two of *Mein Kampf* he observed,

> A man who possesses the art of correct reading will, in studying any book, magazine, or pamphlet, instinctively and immediately perceive everything which in his opinion is worth permanently remembering, either because it is suited to his purpose or generally worth knowing ... Then, if life suddenly sets some question before us for examination or answer, the memory, if this method of reading is observed ... will derive all the individual items regarding these questions, assembled in the course of decades, [and] submit them to the mind for examination and reconsideration, until the question is clarified or answered.

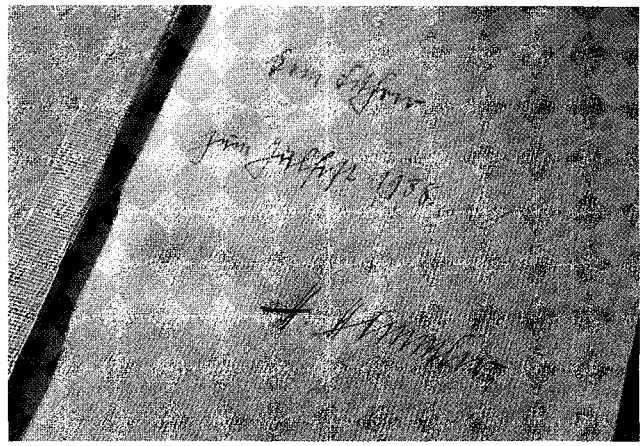
In these marginalia one sees a man (who famously seemed never to listen to anyone, for whom "conversation" was little more than a torrent of monologues) reading passages, reflecting on them, and responding with penciled dashes, dots, question marks, exclamation points, and underscorings—intellectual footprints across the page. Here is one of history's most complex figures reduced merely to a reader with a book and a pencil.

"Books, books, always books!" August Kubizek once wrote. "I just can't imagine Adolf without books. He had them piled up around him at home. He always had a book with him wherever he went." Kubizek,



Hitler's only real friend in his teenage years, recalled after the war that Hitler had been registered with three libraries in Linz, where he attended school, and had passed endless days in the baroque splendor of the Hofbibliothek, the former court library of the Hapsburgs, during his time in Vienna. "*Bücher waren seine Welt*," Kubizek wrote. "Books were his world."

Though Kubizek's reminiscences, first published in the 1950s, are in many ways suspect, his depiction of the future Führer as a bibliophile has been amply corroborated. One of



A gift from Heinrich Himmler

Hitler's first cousins, Johann Schmidt, recounted for a Nazi Party history of the Führer that when Hitler spent summers with relatives in the tiny Waldviertel hamlet of Spital, he invariably arrived with "lots of books in which he was constantly busy reading and working." Hans Frank, Hitler's personal lawyer and the "governor" of Nazi-occupied Poland, recalled before his 1946 execution at Nuremberg that Hitler carried a copy of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* with him throughout World War I. During his incarceration after the failed 1923 Munich putsch, Hitler was regularly supplied with reading materials by friends and associates. He once referred to his time in Landsberg Prison as his "university paid for by the state." During a bout of prison blues in December of 1924 he received a package from Winifred Wagner, the daughter-in-law of the composer Richard Wagner and one of the few people who addressed Hitler with the familiar *du*. It contained a book of Goethe's poetry from the Wagner family library. The 358-page volume, now at the Library of Congress, contains meditative classics such as "Across All Peaks" and "Evening Song," accompanied by handsome full-page pen-and-ink drawings. The inside cover bears a handwritten inscription: "Adolf Hitler, this picture book taken from the book garden of Eva Chamberlain, for your enjoyment in serious lonely hours! Bayreuth, Christmas 1924."

Books seem to have been the gift of choice for Hitler on virtually every occasion. The Hitler Library contains scores of books bearing inscriptions for Christmas, his birthday, and other festive occasions. A book titled

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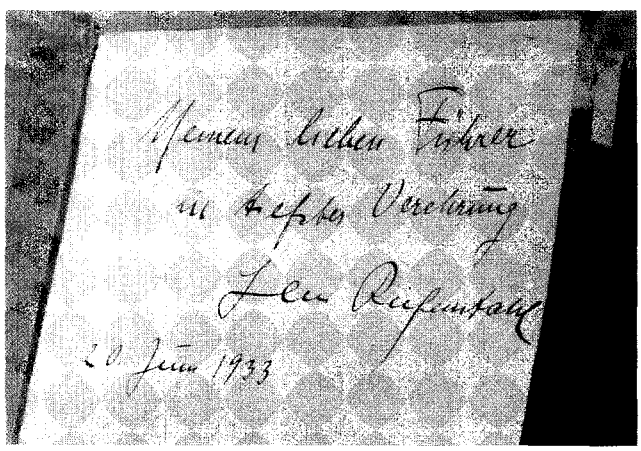
Death and Immortality in the World View of Indo-Germanic Thinkers is inscribed for Hitler by the SS chief Heinrich Himmler on the occasion of "Julfest 1938"—Nazi circumlocution for Christmas. I also discovered books from the controversial filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl—two on the Berlin Olympics and an eight-volume set of the complete works of the nineteenth-century German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte in a rare first edition. Given that Hitler had charged Riefenstahl with filming the Olympic Games, the presence of the first two volumes was understandable; the Fichte was more puzzling.

When I called on Riefenstahl, who lives outside Munich and had just marked her hundredth birthday, she referred me to her published memoirs, in which she devotes a chapter to the Fichte volumes. According to that account, in the spring of 1933 the thirty-year-old filmmaker approached Hitler about the plight of several Jewish friends. "I have great esteem for you as an artist, you have a rare talent," Hitler replied, according to Riefenstahl. "But I cannot discuss the Jewish problem with you." Mortified by his rebuke (Riefenstahl says she felt herself go faint), she later sought to make amends by sending Hitler the Fichte. Bound in white leather with gold embossing, the books bear the inscription "*Meinem lieben Führer in tiefster Verehrung* ['To my dear Führer with deepest admiration'], Leni Riefenstahl."



Fed by gifts and his own acquisitions, Hitler's library swelled dramatically in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In his 1925 tax declaration Hitler listed his total personal assets at a paltry 1,000 marks, and claimed "no property" other than "a writing table and two bookcases with books." By 1930, however, as sales of *Mein Kampf* bolstered his income, book buying represented his third largest tax deduction (after general travel and transportation): 1,692 marks in 1930, with similar deductions in the two years following. More telling still is the five-year insurance policy Hitler took out in October of 1934, with the Gladbacher Fire Insurance Company, on his six-room apartment on the Prinzregentenplatz, in downtown Munich. In the letter of agreement accompanying the policy Hitler valued his book collection, said to consist of 6,000 volumes, at 150,000 marks—half the value of the entire policy. The other half represented his art holdings.

By the late 1930s Hitler had three separate libraries for his ever-expanding collection. At his apartment he removed a wall between two rooms and installed bookshelves. For the Berghof, his Alpine retreat near Berchtesgaden, Hitler built a second-floor study with handmade bookcases; color photographs of the finished space show an elegant setting with Oriental carpets, two globes, and bookcases fitted with glass doors and brass locks. Herbert Döhring, who managed the Berghof from 1936 to 1943, told me that the library could accommodate no more than 500 or 600 volumes. "He reserved this space for the books he really cared about," says Döhring, who helped Hitler to sort the books. "He used to have me send the rest to a storage facility in Munich or to the new Reich Chancellery in Berlin." For his official Berlin residence Hitler had his architect, Albert Speer, design a vast library that occupied the entire west wing. "Inventory records of the Reich Chancellery that we found at the Hoover Institution at Stanford suggest that by the early 1940s Hitler was receiving as many as four thousand books annually," Daniel Mattern told me. In Munich, Gassert and Mattern also discovered architectural sketches for a library annex to the Berghof that was intended to accommodate more than 60,000 volumes. "This was a man with a lot of books," Mattern says.

Unfortunately, Hitler never inventoried his books, and the only detailed accounting of his libraries comes courtesy of the former United Press correspondent Frederick Oechsner, who met Hitler repeatedly and was evidently able to acquaint himself intimately with the Führer's book collections. "I found that his personal library, which is divided between his residence in the Chancellery in Berlin and his country home on the Obersalzberg at Berchtesgaden, contains roughly 16,300 books," Oechsner wrote in his best-selling book *This Is the Enemy* (1942).

According to Oechsner, the biggest single share of Hitler's library, some 7,000 books, was devoted to military matters, in particular "the campaigns of Napoleon, the Prussian kings; the lives of all German and Prussian potentates who ever played a military role; and books on virtually all the well-known military campaigns in recorded history." Another 1,500 volumes concerned architecture, theater, painting, and sculpture. "One book on the Spanish theater has pornographic drawings and photographs, but there is no section on pornography, as such, in Hitler's Library," Oechsner wrote. The balance of the collection consisted of clusters of books on diverse themes ranging from nutrition and health to religion and geography, with "eight hundred to a thousand books" of "simple, popular fiction, many of them pure trash in anybody's language."

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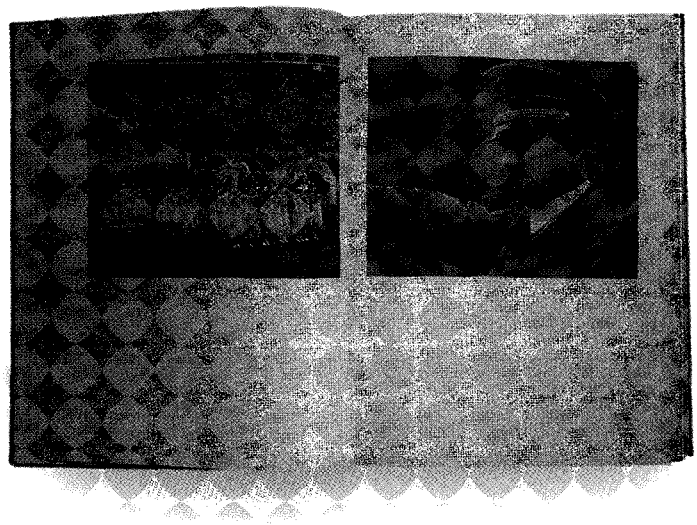
By his own admission, Hitler was not a big fan of novels, though he once ranked *Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and *Don Quixote* (he had a special affection for the edition illustrated by Gustave Doré) among the world's greatest works of literature. The one novelist we know Hitler loved and read was Karl May, a German writer of cheap American-style westerns. In the spring of 1933, just months after the Nazis seized power, Oskar Achenbach, a Munich-based journalist, toured the Berghof—in the Führer's absence—and discovered a shelf of Karl May novels at Hitler's bedside. "The bedroom of the Führer is of



One of Riefenstahl's books about the 1936 Berlin Olympics

spartan simplicity," Achenbach reported in the *Sonntag Morgenpost*. "Brass bed, closet, toiletries, a few chairs, those are all the furnishings. On a bookshelf are works on politics and diplomacy, a few brochures and books on the care of German shepherds, and then—pay attention you German boys! Then comes an entire row of books by—Karl May! *Winnetou*, *Old Surehand*, *Bad Guy*, all our dear old friends." During the war Hitler reportedly admonished his generals for their lack of imagination and recommended that they all read Karl May. Albert Speer recounted in his Spandau diaries,

> Hitler was wont to say that he had always been deeply impressed by the tactical finesse and circumspection that Karl May conferred upon his character Winnetou ... And he would add that during his reading hours at night, when faced by seemingly hopeless situations, he would still reach for those stories, that they gave him courage like works of philosophy for others or the Bible for elderly people.

No one knows the exact extent of Hitler's library. Though Oechsner estimated the original collection at 16,000 volumes, Gassert and Mattern assert that it is impossible to determine the actual dimensions, especially since the majority of the books were either burned or plundered in the final weeks of the war—an assumption confirmed in part by Florian Beierl, the head of the Archive for the Contemporary History of the Obersalzberg, in Berchtesgaden. According to Beierl, Hitler's Berghof experienced successive waves of looters: first local residents, then French and American soldiers, and eventually members of the U.S. Senate. Beierl showed me archival film footage (taken by the legendary World War II photographer Walter Rosenblum) of a delegation of American senators—Burton Wheeler, Homer Capehart, and Ernest McFarland—emerging from the Berghof ruins with books under their arms. "I doubt if they were taking them to the Library of Congress," Beierl said.

I have also been told that a portion of the Hitler Library may have been seized by the Red Army. "Stalin was so paranoid about Hitler that he sent trophy brigades to search for anything connected with him," says Konstantin Akinsha, a former researcher for the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States. "His skull, his uniforms, Eva Braun's dresses, her underwear—they are all in Moscow." Akinsha told me recently that in the early 1990s he heard rumors about a depository in an abandoned church in Uzkoe, a suburb of Moscow, that allegedly contained a huge quantity of "trophy books," including some that had belonged to Hitler.

Grigory Kozlov, another "trophy" sleuth, confirms that a "secret depository" did indeed exist in Uzkoe for more than four decades, with tens of thousands of books stacked from floor to ceiling. "At the beginning of 1995 there was a big discussion about trophy books," Kozlov told me. "They decided to remove these books from Uzkoe and destroy all traces that showed there had been some sort of secret depository there." Now, he says, the books have been dispersed anonymously in libraries and archives across Russia. "I don't know what's true or not," Kozlov told me. "Books were evacuated without records, confiscated without records. I don't know if anyone is ready to talk."

The 1,200 of Hitler's books in the Library of Congress most likely represent less than 10 percent of the original collection. Nevertheless, when I first visited the Hitler Library, in April of 2001, I was surprised to discover that despite the incompleteness of the collection, I could easily discern the collector preserved within his books. In more than 200 World War I memoirs, including Ernst Jünger's *Fire and Blood*, with a personal inscription to "the Führer," I encountered Hitler the "Austrian corporal," with his bushy moustache, his somber demeanor, and his battlefield service, during which he was twice wounded and for which he was twice decorated, once with the Iron Cross first class.

In two olive-drab paperbacks, guidebooks to the cultural monuments of Brussels and Berlin, published by Seemann Verlag and costing three marks each, I glimpsed Hitler the aspiring *Frontsoldat*-cum-artist. The Berlin guide has Hitler's signature in faded purple ink on the inside front cover, with the place and month of purchase: "Fournes, 22 November 1915." In the Brussels guide Hitler simply scrawled "A. Hitler" in pencil; the last three letters trail downward like

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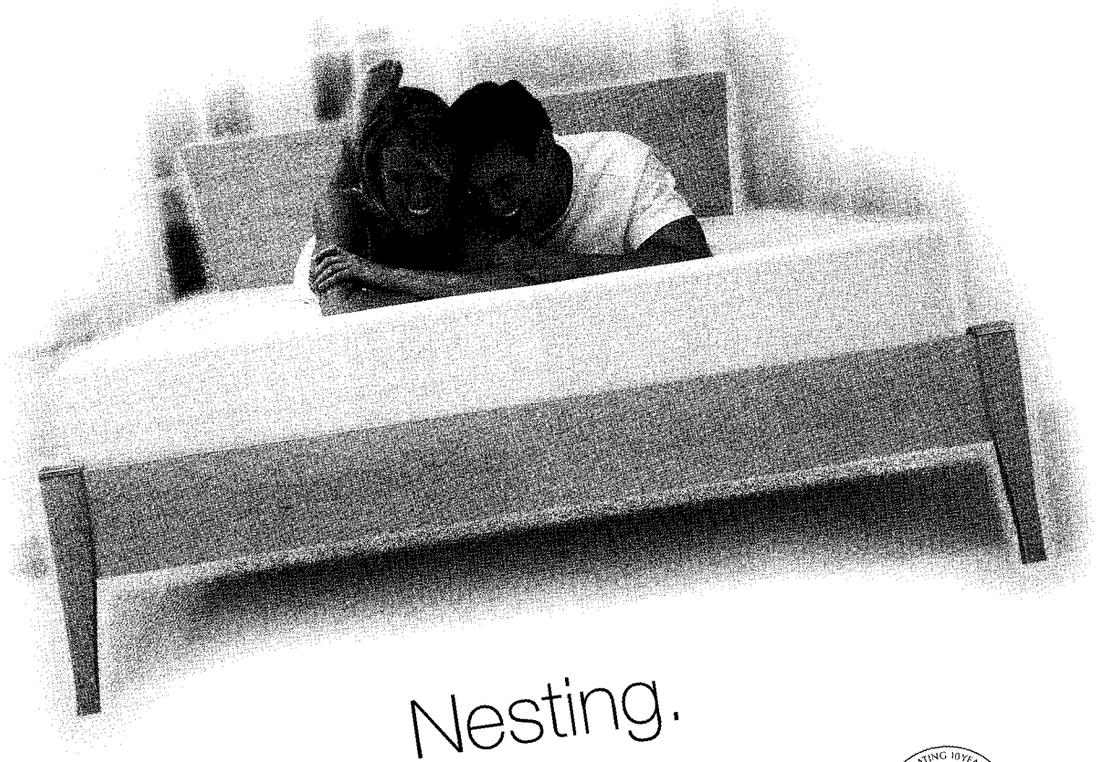

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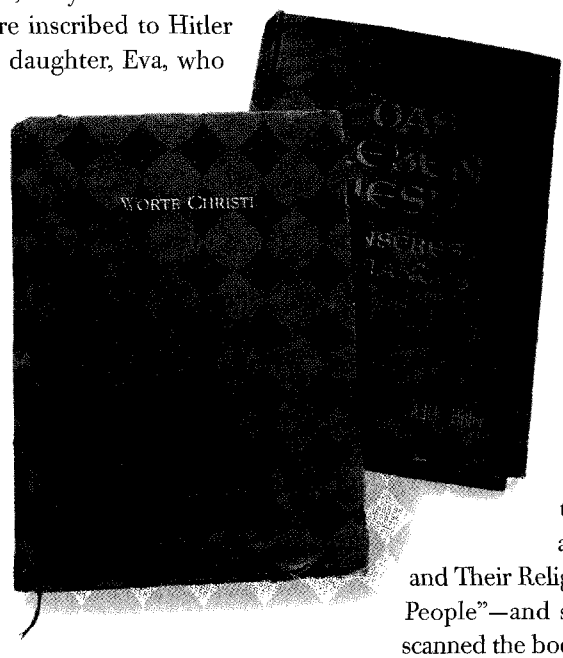
unspooling ribbon. A chapter on Frederick the Great is especially worn, its pages tattered, marked with fingerprints, and smeared with red candle wax. Tucked in the crease between pages 162 and 163 I found a three-quarter-inch strand of stiff black hair.

In dozens of books, with salutations from the likes of Prince August Wilhelm—son of the last German Kaiser—and the heirs of the Bechstein piano dynasty, I saw Hitler the protégé of Germany's financial, social, and cultural elite. One book on *Führertum*—"leadership"—was presented to Hitler by the industrialist Fritz Thyssen, who had introduced him to some of Germany's leading businessmen at a decisive meeting in Düsseldorf in January of 1932. "To the Führer, Adolf Hitler, in memory of his presentation to the Düsseldorf Industrial Club," Thyssen wrote on the inside cover. Several books are inscribed to Hitler from Richard Wagner's youngest daughter, Eva, who had married Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Chamberlain was an anti-Semitic Englishman best known for his book *The Foundations of the 19th Century*, in which he advanced the thesis that Jesus was of Aryan rather than Semitic blood. Hitler read Chamberlain during his Vienna period, and had a brief audience with the aging anti-Semite at the Wagner estate shortly before being sent to Landsberg Prison. "You know Goethe's differentiation between force and force," Chamberlain wrote Hitler in October of 1923. "There is force which comes from chaos and leads to chaos, and there is force which is destined to create a new world." Chamberlain credited Hitler with the latter.



In a French vegetarian cookbook with an inscription from its author, Maïa Charpentier, I encountered *Monsieur Hitler végétarien*. And I found hints of Hitler the future mass murderer in a 1932 technical treatise on chemical warfare that explores the varying qualities of poison gas, from chlorine to prussic acid (Blausäure). The latter was produced commercially as Zyklon B, which would be notorious for its use in the Nazi extermination camps.

I also found, however, a Hitler I had not anticipated: a man with a sustained interest in spirituality. Among the piles of Nazi tripe (much of it printed on high-acid paper that is rapidly deteriorating) are more than 130 books on religious and spiritual subjects, ranging from Occidental occultism to Eastern mysticism to the teachings of Jesus Christ—books with titles such as *Sunday Meditations*; *On Prayer*; *A Primer for Religious Questions, Large and Small*; *Large Truths About Mankind, the World and God*. Also included were a German translation of E. Stanley Jones's 1931 best seller, *The Christ of the Mount*; and a 500-page work on the life and teachings of Jesus, published in 1935 under the title *The Son: The Evangelical Sources and Pronouncements of Jesus of Nazareth in Their Original Form and With the Jewish Influences*. Some volumes date from the early 1920s, when Hitler was an obscure rabble-rouser on the fringe of Munich political life; others from his last years, when he dominated Europe.

One leather-bound tome—with WORTE CHRISTI, or "Words of Christ," embossed in gold on the cover—was well worn, the silky, supple leather peeling upward in gentle curls along the edges. Human hands had obviously spent a lot of time with this book. The inside cover bore a dedication: "To our beloved Führer with gratitude and profound respect, Clara von Behl, born von Jansen von den Osten. Christmas 1935."

Worte Christi was so fragile that when the attendant brought it to me, he placed it on a red-velvet pad in a wooden reading stand, a beautifully finished oak contraption with two supports that could be adjusted with small brass pegs to fit the dimensions of the book. No more than a foot wide and eighteen inches long, the stand had a sacred air, as if it belonged on an altar.

I reviewed the table of contents—"Belief and Prayer," "God and the Kingdom of God," "Priests and Their Religious Practices," "The World and Its People"—and skimmed the introduction; then I scanned the book for marginalia that might suggest a close study of the text. A white-silk bookmark, preserved in its original perfection between pages 22 and 23 (only the portion exposed to the air had deteriorated), lay across a description of the Last Supper as related by Saint John. A series of pages that followed contained only a single aphorism each: "Believe in God" (page 31), "Have no fear, just believe" (page 52), "If you believe, anything is possible" (page 53), and so on, all the way to page 95, which offers the solemn wisdom "Many are called but few are chosen."

On page 241 appears the passage "You should love God, your Lord, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your spirit: this is the foremost and greatest commandment. Another is equally important: Love your neighbor as you would love yourself." Beside this passage is one brief penciled line, the only mark in the entire book.

Given Hitler's legendary disdain for organized religion in general and Christianity in particular, I didn't expect him to have devoted much time to the teachings of Christ, let alone to have marked this quintessential Christian virtue. Had this in fact been made by the pencil of Hitler's younger

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sister, Paula, who occasionally visited her brother at the Berghof and remained a devout Catholic until her dying day? Might some other Berghof guest have responded to this holy Scripture?

Possibly—but though most of the spiritually oriented books in the Hitler Library were gifts sent to the Führer by distant admirers, several, like *Worte Christi*, were obviously well read, and some contained marginalia in Hitler's hand that suggested a serious exploration of spiritual matters. If Hitler *was* as deeply engaged with spiritual issues as his books and their marginalia suggest, then what was the purpose of this pursuit?

In the spring of 1943, while the outcome of World War II hung in the balance, the U.S. Office of Strategic Services—forerunner to the CIA—commissioned Walter Langer, a Boston-based psychoanalyst, to develop a "psychological profile" of Adolf Hitler. As Langer later recalled, this was the first time the U.S. government had attempted to psychoanalyze a world leader in order to determine "the things that make him tick."

Over the course of eight months, assisted by three field researchers and advised by three other experts in psychology, Langer compiled more than a thousand typewritten, single-spaced pages of material on his "patient": texts from speeches, excerpts from *Mein Kampf*, interviews with former Hitler associates, and virtually every printed source available. Langer wrote,

> A survey of all the evidence forces us to conclude that Hitler believes himself destined to become an Immortal Hitler, chosen by God to be the New Deliverer of Germany and the Founder of a new social order for the world. He firmly believes this and is certain that in spite of all the trials and tribulations through which he must pass he will finally attain that goal. The one condition is that he follow the dictates of the inner voice that have guided and protected him in the past.

In his summary Langer outlined eight possible scenarios for Hitler's course of action in the face of defeat. The most likely scenario, he suggested in a prescient moment, was that Hitler's belief in divine protection would compel him to fight to the bitter end, "drag[ging] a world with us—a world in flames," and that ultimately he would take his own life.

Langer based his assessment not only on Hitler's repeated references to "divine providence," both in speeches and in private conversations, but also on reports from some of Hitler's most intimate associates that Hitler truly believed he was "predestined" for greatness and inspired by "divine powers." After the war Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, one of Hitler's chief military advisers, seemed to confirm the Langer thesis. "Looking back," he said, "I am inclined to think he was literally obsessed with the idea of some miraculous salvation, that he clung to it like a drowning man to a straw."

Experts since then have been of two minds on the matter of Hitler's spiritual beliefs. Ian Kershaw argues that Hitler consciously constructed an image of himself as a messianic figure, and eventually came to believe the very myth he had helped to fashion. "The more he succumbed to the allure of his own Führer cult and came to believe in his own myth, the more his judgment became impaired by faith in his own infallibility," Kershaw writes in *The Hitler Myth* (1987). But believing in a messianic myth is not the same as believing in God. When I asked Kershaw in 2001 whether he thought Hitler actually believed in divine providence, he dismissed the notion. "I don't think that he had any real belief in a deity of any sort, only in himself as a 'man of destiny' who would bring about Germany's 'salvation,'" he declared. Gerhard Weinberg, who helped sort through the Hitler Library back in the 1950s, likewise dismisses the notion of Hitler as a religious believer, insisting that he was driven by the twin passions of *Blut und Boden*—racial purity and territorial expansion. "He didn't believe in anything but himself," Weinberg told me last summer. Most historians tend to agree.

Some non-historians, however, have different views. In the 1960s Friedrich Heer, a prominent and controversial Viennese theologian, identified Hitler as a misguided "Austrian Catholic," a man whose faith was disastrously misplaced but nevertheless sincere. In a dense, 750-page treatise Heer saw Hitler the Austrian Catholic at every turn: the nine-year-old choirboy catching his first glimpse of a swastika in the coat of arms at the Lambach Monastery; the beer-hall orator whose speeches resound with biblical allusions; the Führer of the Reich who re-created the splendor of the Catholic mass at the annual Nuremberg rally. Even his virulent hatred of Jewry found sustenance in those roots. Fritz Redlich, an eminent Yale psychiatrist, asserts in his book, *Hitler: Diagnosis of a Destructive Prophet*, that Hitler acted from a profound belief in God. Noting Hitler's own words "*Man kommt um den Gottesbegriff nicht um*" ("You cannot get around the concept of God"), Redlich told me last summer that he was certain Hitler believed in a "divine creature." He rejected suggestions that Hitler's invocations of the divine were little more than cynical public posturing and insisted that we ought to take Hitler at his word: "In a way, Hitler was a terrible liar, but he was a tactical liar. In his essential line of thinking he was honest."

Traudl Junge, Hitler's former secretary, would not go so far as to say that Hitler believed in God, but she did believe that Hitler's repeated references to the divine were more than just for show. Junge—who died of cancer in February of last year—told me the previous summer that Hitler spoke of such things in private as well as in public. After two and a half years of daily contact with Hitler, she was convinced that he believed in some form of divine protection, especially after surviving a dramatic assassination attempt in 1944. "After the July 1944 attack," she told me, "I believe he felt himself to be an instrument of providence, and believed he had a mission to fulfill."

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In my hands I hold a book about Nostradamus, the sixteenth-century French mystic whose predictions of epic calamities have fascinated generations, and whose stanza "From poor people a child will be born / who with his tongue will seduce many people" has been interpreted as prophesying the rise of Adolf Hitler. Printed on high-acid paper, this volume, with its 137 brittle, crumbling pages, bears a publication date of 1921 but feels centuries older. The book promises to "decypher and reveal for the first time the prophesies on the future of Europe and the rise and fall of France from 1555 to 2200." Its final pages offer additional mystical edification in a series of advertisements for related texts: *Memoirs of a Spiritualist*, *The Wandering Soul*, *How Can I Protect Myself From Suggestion and Hypnosis?*, *Soul and Cosmos*, *The Realm of the Invisible*, and *Human Destiny and the Course of the Stars*. Pasted inside this moldering volume is one of Adolf Hitler's bookplates.

The Predictions of Nostradamus belongs to a cache of occult books that Hitler acquired in the early 1920s and that were discovered in the private quarters of his Berlin bunker by Colonel Albert Aronson in May of 1945. As part of the Allied occupation forces, Aronson was among the first Americans to enter Berlin after the collapse of the Nazi resistance. "When my uncle arrived, the Russians took him on a tour of Hitler's bunker," one of Aronson's nephews recalls. "He said that the Russians had pretty much picked the place clean, but there were some pictures and a pile of books they let him take." According to the nephew, the books remained in Aronson's attic until his death, at which point they were bequeathed to his nephew, who donated them to Brown University in 1979.

Today the eighty volumes are housed in the basement vault of Brown's rare-book collection at the John Hay Library, where they share shelf space with Walt Whitman's personal copy of a first edition of *Leaves of Grass* and John James Audubon's original folios of *Birds of America*. According to Samuel Streit, the associate librarian for special collections, the Hitler books have attracted virtually no attention from scholars. Streit himself has examined the collection only once, and his most vivid recollection was the Hitler bookplate. "I know this sounds strange," says Streit, an amiable man in his mid-fifties, "but from the standpoint of bookplate design, it is quite tastefully done."

Like the Library of Congress collection, Brown's eighty Hitler books constitute a hodgepodge: picture books, art journals, an Italian libretto of Wagner's *Walküre*, a 1937 edition of *Mein Kampf*, and two editions of Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*. The more than a dozen books on the occult include several devoted to Nordic runes, among them a 1922 history of the swastika, richly illustrated with nearly 500 diverse renderings—in Egyptian hieroglyphics, Greek pottery, Mayan temples, and Christian crosses. *The Dead Are Alive* delivers "incontrovertible evidence on occultism, somnambulism, spiritualism, with sixteen photographs of ghosts." Among the photographic images that fill the final pages of the volume is one of five people levitating a table at an 1892 séance in Genoa and another allegedly showing the ghost of a fifteen-year-old Polish girl, Stasia, being consumed by a "luminous, misty substance." A picture of a rather stately-looking Englishman is captioned "The Phantom of the English writer Charles Dickens who died in 1871 and is buried in Westminster Abbey. He appeared in 1873 and was photographed."

The canon of Hitler historiography declares that Hitler flirted with occultism in the early 1920s, and that he recruited some of his closest ideological lieutenants—Rudolf Hess, Martin Bormann, Alfred Rosenberg, and Heinrich Himmler—from the Thule Society and similar Nordic cults. "When I first knew Adolf Hitler in Munich, in 1921 and 1922, he was in touch with a circle that believed firmly in the portents of the stars," Karl Wiegand, a former Hitler associate, recalled in an article for *Cosmopolitan* in 1939.

COYOTES

Is this world truly fallen? They say no.
For there's the new moon, there's the Milky Way,
There's the rattler with a wren's egg in its mouth,
And there's the panting rabbit they will eat.
They sing their wild hymn on the dark slope,
Reading the stars like notes of hilarious music.
Is this a fallen world? How could it be?

And yet we're crying over the stars again,
And over the uncertainty of death,
Which we suspect will divide us all forever.
I'm tired of those who broadcast their certainties,
Constantly on their cell phones to their redeemer.
Is this a fallen world? For them it is.
But there's that starlit burst of animal laughter.

The day has sent its fires scattering.
The night has risen from its burning bed.
Our tears are proof that love is meant for life
And for the living. And this chorus of praise,
Which the pet dogs of the neighborhood are answering
Nostalgically, invites our answer, too.
Is this a fallen world? How could it be?

—MARK JARMAN

Mark Jarman's most recent book is Body and Soul: Essays on Poetry *(2002). He teaches at Vanderbilt University.*

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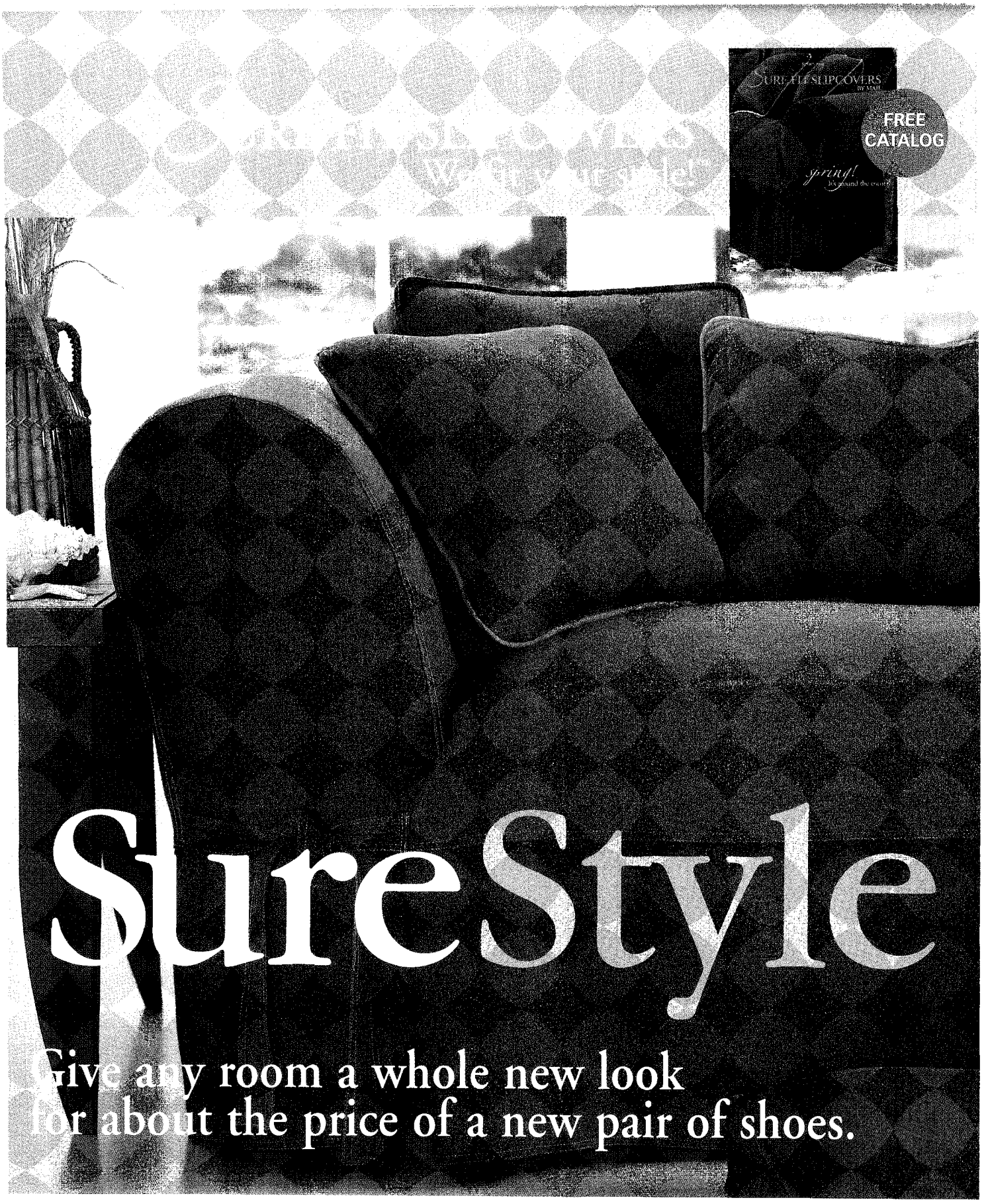

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"There was much whispering about the coming of 'another Charlemagne and a new Reich.' How far Hitler believed in these astrological forecasts and prophesies in those days I never could get out of the Führer. He neither denied nor affirmed belief. He was not averse, however, to making use of the forecasts to advance popular faith in himself and his then young and struggling movement."

Most scholars dismiss the notion that Hitler seriously entertained the ideas of these cults, but the marginalia in several of his books confirm at least an intellectual engagement in the substance of Weimar-era occultism. The Brown collection contains books by such figures as Adamant Rohm, a "magnetopathic doctor" from Wiesbaden; Carl Ludwig Schleich, a Berlin physician who pioneered the use of local anesthesia; and Joseph Anton Schneiderfranken, who wrote numerous books on reincarnation and otherworldly phenomena under the pseudonym Bô Yin Râ.

One of the most heavily marked books is *Magic: History, Theory and Practice* (1923), by Ernst Schertel. When I typed the author's name into one Internet search engine, I scored eight hits, including sites on Satanism, eroticism, sadomasochism, and flagellation. When I typed his name into Google, I scored twenty-six hits, including sites on parapsychology, astrology, and diverse sexual practices. According to a Web site for Germany's sadomasochistic community, Schertel wrote numerous books on flagellation and eroticism, and was "a central figure" in the German nudist movement of the 1920s and 1930s.

Hitler's copy of *Magic* bears a handwritten dedication from Schertel, scrawled on the title page in pencil. A 170-page softcover in large format, the book has been thoroughly read, and its margins scored repeatedly. I found a particularly thick pencil line beside the passage "He who does not carry demonic seeds within him will never give birth to a new world."

One of the oldest volumes of literature still in the Hitler Library is a 1917 German edition of *Peer Gynt*, Henrik Ibsen's epic of a "Nordic Faust" who cuts a swath of human suffering—betraying friends, abandoning women, trading in slaves, and committing cold-blooded murder—on his way to becoming "emperor of the whole world." When challenged to account for his sundry trespasses, Gynt declares that he would rather burn in hell for excessive sins than simmer in obscurity with the rest of humanity. Edvard Grieg set this cruel play to beautiful music. Hitler's copy of *Peer Gynt*—handsomely illustrated by Otto Sager—bears a simple inscription by its German translator: "Intended for his dear friend Adolf Hitler. Dietrich Eckart. Munich, October 22, 1921."

Few people could call Hitler *"Freund,"* and fewer still *"lieber Freund."* For Hitler, Eckart was both friend and family, a mentor and a father figure. When the two men first met, late in 1919, Hitler was a thirty-year-old political upstart a little more than a year out of the trenches, without a penny to his name. Eckart was a fifty-one-year-old playwright with a runaway hit (his adaptation of *Peer Gynt*), a paintbrush moustache, a morphine addiction, and a legendary hatred of Jews; one Munich newspaper described him as a "raging anti-Semite" who would "ideally like to consume a half dozen Jews daily with his sauerkraut." After working with Hitler at an early Nazi Party event, Eckart began grooming him for political life. He bought Hitler his first trench coat, gave him instruction in public speaking, and introduced him to members of Munich society, often with the icebreaker "This is the man who will one day liberate Germany." Hitler once called Eckart the "polar star" of the Nazi movement, and dedicated the first volume of *Mein Kampf* to him. "Follow Hitler!" Eckart allegedly exhorted on his deathbed, in 1923. "He will dance, but the music to which he dances was composed by me."

For all the vitriol Hitler spewed upon Judaism, he came to hold Christianity in equal disdain. "Christianity is the worst thing that ever happened to mankind," he declared during an after-dinner rant in July of 1941. "Bolshevism is the illegitimate child of Christianity. Both are an outgrowth of the Jew."

Hitler was the classic apostate. He rebelled against the established theology in which he was born and bred, all the while seeking to fill the resulting spiritual void. As the Hitler Library suggests, he found no shortage of latter-day prophets peddling alternative theologies. Mathilde von Kemnitz, the wife of Erich Ludendorff, the venerated World War I general who joined Hitler in the Munich putsch, promoted a neo-Teutonic pagan cult that called for the destruction of churches and the creation of forest temples and places of sacrifice. A 1922 volume of her writings, *Triumph of the Will to Immortality*, bears a bizarre and cryptic inscription to Hitler.

> Now don't forget you young, blessed soul,
> If you never leave the afterlife
> You will thus be a perfect God
> For as long as you live.

Hitler tolerated Kemnitz's neo-pagan looniness until Ludendorff's death, in December of 1937. In the autumn of 1939 the Nazi government, invoking wartime rationing, terminated paper supplies for Kemnitz's publication *At the Holy Well* (*Am Heiligen Quell*), effectively silencing her movement. Kemnitz, who survived the war, never forgave Hitler the betrayal.

Guida Diehl, a prolific Weimar writer who fancied herself the "female Führer," showered Hitler with titles, including *Burn! Holy Flame!* and *The Will of the German Woman*. In a handbook on how to conduct a German Christmas in "times of need and struggle," Diehl wrote to Hitler, "We struggle for the German soul, which fashioned the German Christmas from Christ himself! Sieg heil!" There is no indication that Hitler ever opened, let alone read, any of Diehl's books.

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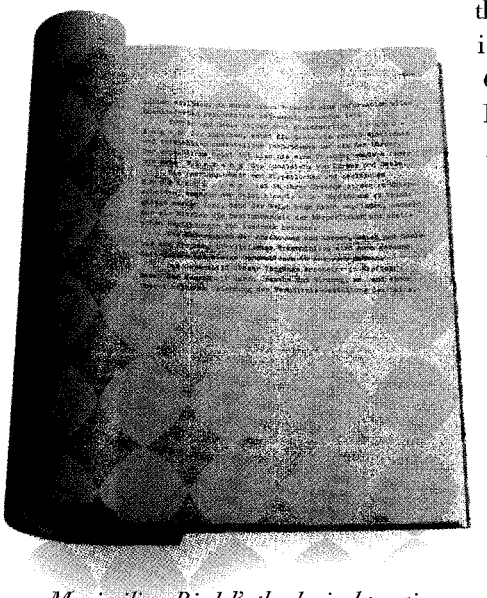
Unquestionably the most significant unread volume in the Hitler collection is a 1940 edition of Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, the Nazi classic that, with more than a million copies in print at the time, was second only to *Mein Kampf* for the Nazi movement. In the course of its 800 pages Rosenberg delivered the theological framework for a National German Church intended to subsume "the best of the protestant and catholic churches" and eliminate the "Jew-infested Old Testament." Denouncing the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as a "counterfeit of the great image of Christ," Rosenberg envisioned a "fifth gospel" depicting Jesus as an Aryan superman—"The powerful preacher and the raging prophet in the temple, the man who inspired, and whom everyone followed, not the sacrificial lamb of the Jewish prophets, not the man on the cross."

This particular edition of Rosenberg's legendary anti-Semitic screed has a handsome dark-blue linen cover and contains a full-page black-and-white photograph of Rosenberg standing before a shelf of leather-bound books. Dressed in a three-piece suit, he looks more like a Boston banker than the ideological fanatic who wrote some of the most offensive and impenetrable prose of the Nazi era before being hanged in Nuremberg in 1946. The book bears the Hitler bookplate but is in mint condition; the binding cracked when I opened the cover.



Maximilian Riedel's theological treatise

Despite Rosenberg's repeated attempts to establish his *Myth* as official party doctrine, Hitler insisted that the book was a "private publication" that represented Rosenberg's personal opinions. In conversations Hitler admitted that he had read only "small portions" of it and described it as unreadable. Joseph Goebbels concurred, calling *The Myth* an "intellectual belch."

Hitler's selective reading—or nonreading—of the pseudo-theological texts in his library makes those books he did read, and especially those in which he left marginalia, all the more significant. Here is where the Hitler Library is most useful. In the Fichte volumes given to him by Riefenstahl, I encountered a veritable blizzard of underlines, question marks, exclamation points, and marginal strikes that sweeps across a hundred printed pages of dense theological prose. Where Fichte peeled away the spiritual trappings of the Holy Trinity, positing the Father as "a natural universal force," the Son as the "physical embodiment of this force," and the Holy Ghost as an expression of the "light of reason," Hitler not only underlined the entire passage but placed a thick vertical line in the margin, and added an exclamation point for good measure.

As I traced the penciled notations, I realized that Hitler was seeking a path to the divine that led to just one place. Fichte asked, "Where did Jesus derive the power that has held his followers for all eternity?" Hitler drew a dense line beneath the answer: "Through his absolute identification with God." At another point Hitler highlighted a brief but revealing paragraph: "God and I are One. Expressed simply in two identical sentences—His life is mine; my life is his. My work is his work, and his work my work."

Among the numerous volumes dealing with the spiritual, the mystical, and the occult I found a typewritten manuscript that could well have served as a blueprint for Hitler's theology. This bound 230-page treatise is titled *The Law of the World: The Coming Religion* and was written by a Munich resident named Maximilian Riedel. During the first week of August 1939 the manuscript was hand-delivered to Anni Winter, Hitler's longtime Munich housekeeper, with the request that it be passed to Hitler personally. An accompanying letter read,

> Mein Führer!
>
> Based on a new discovery I have been able to prove, with incontrovertible scientific evidence, the concept of the trinity of God as a natural law. One of the results of this discovery is, among other things, the seamless relationship between the terms: Truth-Law-Duty-Honor. In essence, the origins of all science, philosophy and religion. The significance of this discovery has led me to ask Frau Winter to hand to you personally the enclosed manuscript.
>
> Heil mein Führer!
> Max Riedel
> Grünwald
> Oberhachingerweg 1

Riedel made a smart tactical move in delivering his manuscript to Hitler's Munich residence. Whereas at the Berghof, Hitler received hundreds of books, and at the Reich Chancellery all such correspondence went through secretaries' hands, in Munich the only filter was Hitler's housekeeper. Based on the marginalia, it seems that Hitler not only received the Riedel manuscript but also read it carefully with pencil in hand. Individual sentences and entire paragraphs are underlined, sometimes twice or even three times.

In this densely written treatise Riedel established the groundwork for his "new religion," replacing the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost with a new tripartite unity, the *"Körper, Geist und Seele"*—"body, mind, and soul." Riedel argued that traditionally mankind has recognized five senses, which relate only to the physical aspects of our

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existence, and that this hinders our ability to perceive the true nature of our relationship to God and the universe. He offered seven additional "senses" that every human being possesses, which are related to the subjective perception of the world; among them Riedel included our inherent sense of what is right and wrong, our emotional sense of another person, our sense of self-preservation. On a two-page centerfold he illustrated his theory with a circular diagram in which various concepts—"soul," "space," "reality," "present," "past," "possibility," "transformation," "culture," "afterlife," "humanity," "infinity"—are connected by a spider web of lines. "The body, mind and soul do not belong to the individual, they belong to the universe," the author explained.

Riedel's "trinity" seems to have attracted Hitler's particular attention. A dense penciled line parallels the following passage: "The problem with being objective is that we use objective criteria as the basis for human understanding in general, which means that the objective criteria, that is, the rational criteria, end up serving as the basis for all human understanding, perception and decision-making." By using the five traditional senses to achieve this "objectivity," Riedel declared, human beings exclude the possibility of perceiving—through the additional seven senses he identified—the deeper forces of the world, and are thus unable to achieve that unity of body, mind, and soul. "The human mind never decides things on its own, it is the result of a discourse between the body and the soul," he claimed.

The sentence not only caught Hitler's attention—beneath it is a thick line, and beside it in the margin are three parallel pencil marks—but was echoed two years later in one of his monologues. "Mind and soul ultimately return to the collective being of the world," Hitler told some guests in December of 1941. "If there is a God, then he gives us not only life but also consciousness and awareness. If I live my life according to my God-given insights, then I cannot go wrong, and even if I do, I know I have acted in good faith."

As I sat in the rarefied seclusion of the Jefferson Building's second-floor reading room one day, listening to the muffled roar of traffic and the distant wail of police sirens in late-summer Washington, I attempted to comprehend the full significance of this sentence to which Hitler seems to have responded so emphatically. Back in 1943 Walter Langer had concluded—correctly, to my mind—that in order to understand Hitler one had to understand his profound belief in divine powers. But Hitler believed that the mortal and the divine were one and the same: that the God he was seeking was in fact himself.

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LITERARY LIVES *by Edward Sorel*

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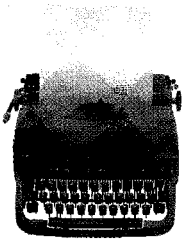

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A GOOD COUNTRY

A short story

BY GEETA SHARMA JENSEN

Illustration by Stan Fellows

I always said this was a beautiful country, a good country. I'd said it to my husband, Shwe Thant, many times during the four years since the Lutheran church workers had taken us from a noisy Burmese refugee camp in Thailand and settled us here in Pine Grove, Wisconsin. And it was what I was thinking as I squatted in my kitchen garden, picking the last of the herbs for the fish soup I was making for Shwe's evening meal.

Already October was ending. The soil was dark yet crumbly, like rough ground coffee, from a lack of rain, and the gourds and clumps of cilantro and sorrel I'd tended all summer were yellowing stiffly. The fields around me—belonging to Mr. Thomsen and to loud-voiced Mr. Cooper, next door—were filled with dried cornstalks and lines of purple cabbage. From the cold ground where I crouched, I could see Mr. Cooper's rusting ploughs and threshers rising against the parchment sky like the skeletons of ancient animals. The abandoned machines had become as familiar to me, had begun to seem as much a part of the landscape, as the tinkling pagoda spires in my Amarapura, my home town.

I was reaching for the cilantro when I heard the spruces rustle alongside Mr. Cooper's house and his voice calling out, "Suu! Hi! Well, well, and don't you look like Isadora Duncan in that gauzy thing."

I did not know this Isadora, but I'd lived in America long enough to know that its people freely said many nice things to each other in society even if they did not mean them, and so I smiled and said, "Thank you, Mr. Cooper, you are so kind." I unwound my chiffon scarf, removed my bamboo hat, turned it upside down, and filled its hollow with sprigs of cilantro from the pouch I'd made by holding up the bottom of my skirtlike *longyi*. "Do you think, Mr. Cooper, that rain might come soon? Or snow? Look at the honeysuckle on our porch. So dry. Its leaves are curled. And they've been falling all summer."

"Dang," Mr. Cooper said. He strode to the creeper and peered at its curled leaves. He was a tall man, nearly as tall as the top of our front door. "Looks like a fungus or something. Better get Swen to spray it. Send him over. I'll give him something."

"Swen" is what Mr. Cooper and the other farmers in Pine Grove called my husband. The name began as a joke one afternoon when we were eating fried perch at the Crossroads Bar and Grill, and Mr. Cooper and his friends were playing darts and drinking brandy. They teased that Shwe—they said it slowly, "Sh-way"—sounded too Burmese, too foreign, that after all these years my husband ought to have a name that fit with the Swensons, Hansens, Olafssons, and Jensens in Pine Grove. So they settled on Swen. I did not mind. The name, I told my husband, was a sign of acceptance, of friendship.

Mr. Cooper lingered at my front door, squinting and smiling and tapping his square-nailed fingers against a pad of paper clamped to a metal clipboard he clutched against his broad chest. He had cleaned the blackness from beneath his fingernails. His hair, the color of coconut husks, was parted on the side and combed into two puffs. And instead of the stained overalls he normally wore, he had buttoned himself—with difficulty, it seemed to me—into a brown suit. I suddenly realized that he was in his going-out clothes, which meant I should ask him in.

"Won't you join me in a cup of tea, Mr. Cooper?" I asked, making my voice as placid as water in a deep well.

"Tea? At this time of the day? Heck, how 'bout a beer?"

I led him into our sitting room, ushering him into the cane armchair I'd found in a thrift shop in Racine. In the kitchen I poured the beer Shwe kept especially for guests into a tall glass mug, sprinkled powdered sugar on diamond-shaped pieces of my freshest *sanwinmakin*, our best Burmese sweet dish, and took everything out on a lacquer tray with a pot of green tea. Then I settled onto the Thai silk of the daybed opposite Mr. Cooper and waited politely to hear the purpose of his visit.

"I'm making the rounds of the neighbors and town residents," he said finally, brushing sugar off his moustache with thick fingers. "Your bakery is darned good, Suu. Now, I want to ask you—what do you think of my yard? I mean, does it bother you?"

I looked at him, puzzled. "It's a very nice yard, Mr. Cooper, very fine, very fine. It is as it's always been since we came. Why do you ask about it now?"

His big head moved up and down slowly. "Yes, noth-

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ing different about it, is there? Yet, Suu, all of a sudden they're trying to shut me down. They say I'm spoiling the countryside."

"Who says?"

"Them," he said, waving his hand in the direction of the ranch house on the shady road curving past our houses.

"The Bishops?" I laughed. "You are teasing me, Mr. Cooper. The Bishops cannot even see all of your yard from their house. The firs and oaks are in their way."

"I know, I know," he said, throwing up his arms and making the front of his suit crease and strain against the buttons. "But they want to close down my repair shop. They've gotten other families—the Schmidts, for one—convinced I'm turning Pine Grove into what they call 'nigger country.' They called the town constable on me twice, you know, and the county fined me twice—big fines, let me tell you—for running a junkyard or some crap like that."

I could hardly speak. I had not known of his troubles. I gazed out our front windows and saw his farm equipment melded with the cornfields, the beaten-down 4x4s and pickups and streaked lawnmowers and Case harvesters lined up useless and innocent in his driveway. A row of old ploughs rose from the browned grass and wild asters in a field on the other side of his tall brick farmhouse. It had been this way since we came. The bleached barn behind his house was filled with broken tractors, wheel rims, old tires, fuel cans, winches, chains, and all sorts of metal parts and repair equipment. It smelled of gasoline and motor oil, and it was messy with rags and crumpled paper towels.

Mr. Cooper had once taught history and math at a Milwaukee tech school. But he missed the land too much, and fifteen years ago, the stories said, he'd returned to the farm of his ancestors. Our friend Tobias Swenson, who was Pine Grove's town chairman and knew everything, told me that when Mr. Cooper came home, everyone was so happy that the 4-H food committee roasted a pig and strung a red banner across Pine Grove Avenue. The whole town turned out for his party in the street. Tobias said every farm town had a Mr. Cooper, *needed* a Mr. Cooper, and sooner or later everyone ended up visiting a Mr. Cooper. It was true. Shwe had gone to him earlier this year for washers for the kitchen taps. Even Mr. Bishop, who was now complaining, had visited Mr. Cooper's barn to get his snowblower fixed.

I swallowed some warm tea and made soothing noises, *chuh, chuh, chuh,* as you would when putting a child to sleep. "This is not fair, not fair, Mr. Cooper," I said. "People must speak out, must help you."

Mr. Cooper balanced his beer mug on the slab of rough cedar that Shwe had hammered into a coffee table and offered me his metal clipboard. I saw that his weak blue eyes looked sunken. Pouches ballooned under them. His cheeks and wide forehead were furrowed. He hadn't been sleeping much, I could tell.

"This is a petition, and I'd appreciate it if you'd sign, Suu," he said, handing me a pen. "It says you do not find my tractors and trucks bothersome. The Bishops and their pals have asked the town board to close me down. They bellyache that I'm violating the zoning law, operating a junkyard, a business, a nuisance, on farmland that's not zoned for such business. But I say I have a right to keep machines on my land. Don't you agree?"

"Yes, of course, of course," I said, and I wrote my name, SUU THANT, in wobbly but big letters in blue ink on his petition. And when he asked me to speak in his favor at the big town-board meeting around Thanksgiving, I did not hesitate for a moment. I said yes, for certain I'd be there. It was in keeping with what our Buddha taught.

After Mr. Cooper left, I stood at our bedroom window for a long time—five minutes, seven minutes, who knows?—thinking about his troubles. How could this happen, I thought, in Pine Grove, population 673, a place so safe we didn't lock our doors, a place so insignificant its downtown consisted only of Harry's Hardware and the A-One Feedstore, a community so closed that stony-faced farmers raised tumblers of brandy to me only after I'd slipped my arm into the Swensons' bawling Holstein one windy night and pulled its calf, all wet and bloody, onto the damp straw? That was our second deer season here. The men were hunting. I remember the flashlight shivering in Ruthie Swenson's hand as I felt for the calf, and her pink lips muttering, "Oh, sweet Jesus. Oh, sweet Jesus." And I had murmured, impatiently, without thinking how silly I sounded, "Try the Buddha's eightfold path. It will keep the flashlight steady."

Thoughts floated in my head like lily pads in a clogged pond. Why did Jim and Bettina Bishop have so little concern for their neighbors? I was puzzled, because since we'd come to Pine Grove, I had not met many Americans without some kindness in their hearts. Mr. Bishop was a machinist at the Ladish plant, which Ruthie said was an important factory about forty-five minutes away, just this side of Milwaukee. I would sometimes see his blue Ford pickup bump into his driveway and his sharp face poke out of the window. "Bettina, get that bike out of the way!" he'd scream at his wife. "How many times must I tell you to keep the driveway clear?" Other times he'd sing out, "Tina, give your old man a kiss." He liked to fly the American flag every day from a thin pole sunk in a circle of cement, which Bettina tried to cover with tubs of petunias in summer and red plastic geraniums in winter. We also had a flag, but I did not favor plastic geraniums.

Bettina Bishop worked in the city too, as a nurse's aide. She was tall and big-boned, and though she had smooth pink skin and her brown hair swirled prettily around her head in thick curls, her features, I'm sorry to say (and may the Buddha forgive me), were put together in such a way as to make her unpleasing. Whenever we came face-to-face, usually at Harry's Hardware, she would say politely, "Hello! Isn't this a nice day we're having?" But once I heard her in

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the next aisle telling her friend Peggy Schmidt that they'd moved to the country to get away from "the crime and them black folks in Milwaukee," and wouldn't you know it, they were living next to some "slant-eyed foreigners."

The Bishops and the Schmidts and a few others were what Tobias Swenson called the NAs—new arrivals. Tobias snorted every time he said it. These people had come to Pine Grove only about two years before. Sometimes Bettina and Peggy earned extra money helping at the Swensons' mink ranch during pelting season. But generally they didn't have much to do with Tobias or with any of the others whose families had worked the land or raised dairy cattle on it for generations. Perhaps that's why they didn't understand the need for Mr. Cooper's tractors and his tilting, machinery-filled barn.

The lights of Milwaukee's southern suburbs began to come on in the distance. They were strung out in bunches on the horizon, twinkling and shining as if their only job was to hem in the blackness of the fields, tell us where the city ended and the silent, undulating country began. Now and again I could see the lights of the semis slipping by on the expressway two miles away, like raindrops on a power line. And once I heard the hoot of the Amtrak rushing north from Chicago.

I turned from the window to lay out Shwe's loose cotton Shan pants and velvet thongs near the futon before he came home. I always tried to make the house soft and comfortable for him, and told him gently that this was a good country, a beautiful country. I reminded him of this often during the long, dark evenings when his footsteps came haltingly into the house and I saw that his eyes were red from standing too long in the hissing, smoking kitchen of our restaurant, the Star of Rangoon. He no longer smiled much, my husband. It had been so for nearly four years. "Ah, Suu, my sweet squirrel," he said to me often, "the banana trees we planted along our little Amarapura creek must be tall and heavy with fruit by now. Do you suppose Ko Tommy has been watering the jasmines beneath the house? And do you remember May-May's coconut rice?" He'd go on, his voice like the whispers of ancestral spirits unable to get free of this earth. Sometimes, I confess, I wanted to say Ruthie's favorite words to him—wanted to stand like her, with my feet apart, one leg bent, head cocked, and say, "Get over it, will ya?" But I come from a line of dutiful wives, polite women, and it was not in my nature to insult my husband that way.

So I talked to him about the beauty of this country, of Pine Grove, where we had eventually come after Burmese university students started the riots of 1988 and the army killed thousands in the streets of Rangoon, and the dictator Ne Win's generals began to jail history teachers like my

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husband. Look how the snow lies so soft and white in the fields here, I would tell Shwe. Are you not reminded of the white radiance of the Buddha's enlightenment? And see how black the earth is here in summer. Does it not give us the plumpest squashes and tomatoes? Don't the apples taste sweeter than anything our yellow soil in Amarapura ever produced? And are not the farmers, the Swensons and the Hansens and the others, our friends? Many evenings I massaged Shwe's thick shoulders with the tips of my fingers and whispered, "We are safe here. We are free to have our way of life. This is a good country." The past is like the tail of a kite, I said. If it is too long and heavy, it will pull you down. We must keep the tail short and light so that our kite will dance in the wind.

"You're young and optimistic, Suu," he would reply gently. "You are adaptable, and that is good. But I am an old man." He would slide his long fingers down my hair all the way to my waist. "Such a small waist. Such an innocent squirrel."

I did not think my husband was old. He was just forty-nine. And I was thirty-eight. But of course I understood what he was saying, though he never told me so in words. He was remembering not his jasmine bushes, or the fragrance of the guttering candles in the pagodas, but his students, his teaching, his university lectures about the big fights, the revolutions of the world, the French, the Russian, the American, the Chinese, the Indian. He saw himself as a professor still. He did not think of himself as what he had become, a cook, even if it was in his own restaurant, in a nice strip mall in South Milwaukee.

I brewed fresh tea. On a porcelain plate as many-colored as the sea I arranged fermented tea leaves and slivers of ginger, pink from steeping in vinegar. I surrounded the leaves with mounds of fried garlic, red chilies, dried prawns, peanuts, and toasted sesame seeds. Shwe was partial to my tea-leaf salad, and I knew it would soothe him. I wanted him to be in a good mood when I told him about Mr. Cooper; I was afraid he wouldn't want me to speak in public for our neighbor. By the time the mall closed and Shwe came home, I was ready. I'd made myself look nice for him. My hair was knotted high on my head and decorated with yellow chrysanthemums from the garden. The blossoms matched my *longyi*, which I'd wrapped extra tightly around my hips and let fall gently to my ankles.

"Ah, squirrel, pretty squirrel," Shwe said, touching my chin lightly. "What a good day we had at the restaurant. Very busy. But that means my muscles are tired."

He dropped his Shan bag on the tiles and bent down to pull out a manila envelope, which he presented to me with a deep bow. "The money."

"Crazy man," I said, and giggled. "Oh, phoo, you smell of peanut oil and cigarette smoke. Hurry with your bath. I'll heat the fish soup. And I have a special snack for you."

I carried the six hundred dollars he gave me into our bedroom and took down the framed picture of the Ava Bridge that hung above the dresser. I could hear the bath water sloshing loudly as I unlocked a small door in the wall and packed the money into the safe Shwe had built between the studs. The money to run our restaurant was seen to by the bank. But after the desperate night when we had dressed as peasants and slipped over the border into Thailand with our money hidden in our head wraps, neither Shwe nor I felt easy without most of our personal savings close by. The stack of bills in the wall safe was quite tall by now. Shwe thought that by the end of the year we would have enough to buy our small house from the resettlement committee of the Lutheran church. On the installment plan, like Americans, Shwe said, winking. Oh, it was a lovely house—once a bunkhouse for farmhands, but now pretty, with cream-colored shutters, and clematis and honeysuckle twirling up the porch.

We ate the fish soup in silence and cleared our palates with pinches of my tea-leaf salad. Shwe chewed steadily, nodding now and then with obvious pleasure. Afterward, lulled by the rippling, tinny sounds of Burmese xylophones, we sat in his workshop, he carving figures out of wood, and I knitting scarves for Ruthie's Computers for Kids fundraiser. After each purl row I glanced at him, trying to see in his face if I should now bring up Mr. Cooper. But every time, Shwe's eyes were busy, his head bent over the miniature tax collector he was carefully shaping. Delicate pine figures, some with moustaches, some with elaborate headdresses, lay in a row on his workbench. They would soon join the hundreds of tiny figures in a replica of King Mindon's Glass Palace, which floated like a celestial mirage, a strange dream, in the middle of Shwe's workshop. I did not know what to make of this—this ancient Burmese city that Shwe had begun creating after we left the Thai camps. But it made his eyes tremble with light, so I refrained from pointing out that he was making a world that was not ours, a world we could not have anymore.

Coyotes were crying *woo-ooo* in the dark fields, and I'd begun to massage Shwe's tired muscles, by the time I mentioned Mr. Cooper. Shwe lay on the futon, the bottoms of his trousers rolled up to his knees, and grunted softly as my supple fingers kneaded his calves. By the time my palms were pressing down on his thighs, he knew all about Mr. Cooper's troubles.

"It's not fair, is it, Shwe?" I said, pausing to pin a strand of hair that had escaped from my knot. "Poor Mr. Cooper. He looked very worried, you know. Of course we must help him."

Shwe stretched and changed position. "I don't know, Suu. It's not our quarrel."

"Shwe!"

"What? I'm right, aren't I? It isn't our quarrel. Why get in the middle of someone else's fight?"

"But Mr. Cooper is our friend, our neighbor. We must help him. It is the way."

Shwe sat up slowly, his hair sticking out stiffly, and en-

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circled my bony wrists with his fingers. "Squirrel, listen to me," he said, his broad face flushed with eagerness and his memories. "We are Burmese, and one day we will go back to our country. The general cannot live forever. He will go, the junta will change, things will change. Then who will want to hurt an old retired professor who does not teach anymore? I will be seen as harmless, and we will live again in our teak house. Ah, the house—remember how it sat so high on its stilts among the palms? Remember the breezes blowing through the rooms, Squirrel, and the Sagaing hills green across the river? So why get mixed up today with another's troubles?"

"But we live here now," I persisted, and to make sure he understood my point, I looked boldly, maybe even sternly, into his face. Then I said softly, "Lie down now. Let me walk on your back."

His smooth, almost hairless skin was warm and sweet against the soles of my feet. I made my slender body feather-light and walked as my mother and her mother and her mother before her had walked to soothe the bodies of their men. I swayed first on the calves, lightly, oh, so lightly, and then on the backs of the thighs, lightly still, and then teetered on the pillows of his buttocks, balancing, my arms outstretched like those of Ruthie's Jesus, and then the knobs of his spine were like smooth round pebbles between my toes and I was stepping, heavily and leisurely now, onto the safety of his sturdy back, feet sinking gently into the silt of his flesh, rocking, rocking, listening to his sighs rising like butterflies to meet me in the silken night.

And so I walked, back and forth, back and forth. Finally, pausing at his shoulders, I said, "And how will we live when we return to Amarapura?"

His breath wafted against the loose fabric of the pillow. "I've thought it through, Squirrel. I'm saving money. We'll buy this house. In five years, maybe six, we will sell it, and the restaurant, and the Toyota. And there you have it—enough dollars to last a lifetime in Myanmar. You'll have ayahs and gardeners as before. And you can study midwifery instead of pulling cows and horses into the world, as you do here."

I turned to walk back toward his feet. "The Buddha said all life is sacred. Human beings, cows, horses, pigs—it is the same. It's all good work. And I like to garden. It's my work for the restaurant."

I lingered on his back, slowly shifting my weight from one leg to the other. When had he begun dreaming these dreams? Each year, I knew, the vine of our daily life in Pine Grove would lash us tighter to this country. Five years, eight years, ten years—ah, Shwe, love, will this not have become our home by then?

"Tell me, what has this future you've been planning secretly got to do with Mr. Cooper and his troubles right now?" I said. "The Buddha says we must help our fellow man. We are Mr. Cooper's nearest neighbors. If we say his machines do not bother us, that will help him. I must speak for him."

Shwe did not answer. It annoyed me sometimes that he could be so irreligious, so self-centered. I stepped off his body, straddled his lower back, and brushed my lips against his neck. "Mr. Cooper could lose his livelihood, Shwe. Suppose someone threatened to close your business, and no one spoke for you? Mr. Cooper is a good man. Remember how he drove us everywhere our first two years here? And the time he fixed your Toyota's muffler? Answer me, Shwe—has he not helped us?"

"Yes."

"Do we not owe him something?"

"Yes."

"So," I said, and slipped off his back and curled against his body.

We did not discuss Mr. Cooper again. Shwe did not forbid me to take Mr. Cooper's side publicly. But when I showed him the words I wanted to say at the town meeting, words I'd scribbled on grocery bags and on pages torn from my household-accounts book, he waved his hands and returned the paper scraps to me without reading them. "Nothing good comes from interfering in someone else's fight," he said. I did not reply. Frost threatened that night, but I didn't ask him to help me bring in the tomato plants. I dragged the two tubs slowly up the kitchen steps and inside the glass patio doors by myself. And I didn't clean up the trail of mud until I was sure he had seen it.

The next morning the gourds remaining in our garden glistened with a layer of frost. Spikes of withered impatiens shivered in the wind, and the cilantro had angled over, black and stiff. I glanced out of the bedroom window and saw that Mr. Cooper and the Thomsens had managed to get the cabbages out in time. The only things that remained were Mr. Cooper's old ploughs and tractors and odd squares of parched corn whispering beneath the suddenly vast sky.

It turned cold then, but there was no snow. Ruthie telephoned several days later. "The mink've been pushing fur like mad," she said, her voice high. "We're getting together a crew. It's looking good, sweetie. We could start fleshing next week or so."

"Are you sure?" I asked. "It could warm up again."

"No, no, they're ready. The men will be at them soon."

The fields steamed in the morning, and mist drifted like billowing smoke in the hollows. The earth smelled like Amarapura after a rain. Remembering the chill of Ruthie's shed, I put on silk long johns before slipping into my husband's overalls and a long-sleeved blouse with a high collar. I added the navy wool cardigan I'd knitted for Shwe our first winter in America. I knotted my hair, wrapped a long chiffon scarf around my head,

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and carried three bowls of rice into the prayer room. Sitting on the mat below the papier-mâché Buddha that Shwe had fashioned, I lit candles and made my offerings—one bowl of boiled rice for our ancestral spirits, one for our living elders in Amarapura, and one for us Burmese refugees in America. The Buddha's face was misshapen, his smile not quite right, but how he glittered in the gold paint Shwe had found at Harry's Hardware. I asked the Exalted One to forgive the gassing of minks, whispering that it was the livelihood of my friends the Swensons, and so it was within the teaching; it needed to be done. Then I watered the chrysanthemums at the Buddha's feet and left without waking Shwe.

The eastern sky was iridescent as I walked up Pine Grove Avenue and turned west onto the long empty road to Ruthie's ranch. Thin sheets of ice lay in the ditches like cracked glass. In the fields the bleached corn resembled dried bamboo. I raised my arm to Mrs. Thomsen's boy, who jiggled by slowly on a dusty tractor. "Mornin', Mrs. Thant," he yelled, and I felt the warmth of belonging.

Walking briskly, I rehearsed what I would say about Mr. Cooper's yard at the town meeting. Lights were on in most of the farmhouses I passed, but Mr. Braun's place was dark. No one lived there anymore, now that he was in jail. One cold evening the previous winter Mr. Braun had beaten a man with a brick in a tavern fight over money. Mr. Bishop had been involved in some way too—a small way, because the judge only fined him. Now reeds and tall grasses waved along the curving dirt path that led to Mr. Braun's distant house. Brittle leaves still clung to the tall oaks in his yard, and a red maple interrupted the landscape with color. It was very quiet and beautiful, and I wished that Shwe could see it.

I could smell the mink when I was still halfway up the gravel path to the Swensons' barns and sheds. At the farmhouse the air was thick with the stench—a feral smell, of wetness and organs and things rotting in the damp. I knew the odor would get into our clothes, our hair, our skin, before the day was done. I would taste it.

"Suu!—about time," Ruthie said when I entered the long whitewashed shed. "Coffee and kringle over there. We'll start fleshing soon as the boys bring the stuff in."

The men were in the other shed, skinning, peeling the thick pelts off the thin carcasses of minks as if they were rolling tube socks off feet. I hung up my parka, poured coffee into a paper cup, turned, and came face-to-face with Bettina Bishop and Peggy Schmidt. They were holding slices of kringle and chatting with Ruthie.

"What you doing here?" Bettina said, her voice guttural.

"Same as you, I suppose."

"Hah," she said, and turned her back.

"Peggy and Betty need some extra cashola," Ruthie explained, patting her hair, which this week was butter-colored and arranged like a stiff nest on top of her head. "Their old men are getting laid off." Then, catching sight of Tobias in the doorway, she sang out, "Time for business, gals."

Fleshing mink is easy once you get used to it. We worked quietly for half an hour, getting familiar once again with the machines. The skins came hide side out, but I could see the velvety fur inside: delicate pink, cream, like the insides of shells. The first ones in the season were

---

A Morris Dance

Across the Common, on a lovely May
day in New England, I see and hear
the Middle Ages drawing near,
bells tinkling, pennants bright and gay—
a parade of Morris dancers.

One plucks a lute. One twirls a cape.
Up close, a lifted pinafore
exposes cellulite, and more.
O why aren't they in better shape,
the middle-aged Morris dancers?

Already it's not hard to guess
their treasurer—her; their president—him;
the Wednesday-night meetings at the gym.
They ought to practice more, or less,
the middle-aged Morris dancers.

Short-winded troubadours and pages,
milkmaids with osteoporosis—
what really makes me so morose is
how they can't admit their ages,
the middle-aged Morris dancers.

Watching them gamboling and tripping
on Maypole ribbons like leashed dogs,
then landing, thunderously, on clogs,
I have to say I feel like skipping
the middle-aged Morris dancers.

Yet bunions and receding gums
have humbled me; I know my station—
a member of their generation.
Maybe they'd let me play the drums,
the middle-aged Morris dancers.

—Mary Jo Salter

Mary Jo Salter's fifth book of poems, Open Shutters, *will be published this month. She is the Emily Dickinson Senior Lecturer in the Humanities at Mount Holyoke College.*

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always these pale shades. The dark colors—the rich browns, the lustrous blacks—came later. I was easing another pelt onto the machine's cone when Bettina spat out, "You and Al Cooper got something going on?"

I guided the rotating rubber wheel carefully over the hide and watched the rubber knives scrape off the yellowish fat, watched the globules fly, saw them splatter all over, felt them landing wetly on my face. I wiped my cheek with the back of my hand.

"Hey, I'm talking to you! I saw your signature on Cooper's fancy petition. It ain't got nothing to do with you. What you taking sides for? This ain't even your country." Bettina's round face floated pink and shiny in front of me as if unattached to a body. Flecks of mink fat glistened in her hair like grains of rice.

"I live here," I said slowly. "And I'll tell you—respectfully—that there's nothing wrong with Mr. Cooper's place. His tractors and machinery don't bother us. He is a good neighbor. You should leave the poor man alone."

"Well, I got news for you, honey. They bother *us*. And damn right we're doing something about it. Cooper's turning our neighborhood into a slum, that's what. That old garbage he calls farm machinery ain't even fit for the trash heap. We didn't leave the city to live next to no trash heap. We have a right to a decent view."

"What's wrong with the view?" I said. "This is a beautiful country."

"Listen to the foreigner," she said, hooting with laughter.

"Suu's less of a foreigner to us than you are," Ruthie said suddenly. "Anyhows, Bettina, what do these layoffs mean? You got me worried."

"Ladish started laying off last week. Temporary, they say. But talk is, the economy's slowing."

"Again? Hope it won't slow too much. New York won't be wanting much mink if it goes on this way." Ruthie sighed. She was quiet for a while, her forehead creased. I worried for her, too, but then she said, "We got to keep on fleshing anyhows, ladies. At least this mink oil'll get our faces supersoft. Some bonus, hey?"

Around noon she served us beef stew and brown bread and pickled herring, in the garage. We ate at two picnic tables pushed together, about a dozen of us, the men in stained barn jackets, the women in parkas. The stench of mink was still strong, but we were getting used to it. The men ate hungrily, noisily, sopping up the gravy with hunks of bread. It wasn't until Ruthie set out mugs of watery coffee that Tobias spoke.

"Read in the paper a new subdivision's going in at Stanley Mills," he said. "And I hear talk a developer's nosing around. Talked to old Hansen about his seventy acres. I tell you straight, I ain't going to allow no Shady Acres in Pine Grove."

Tobias Swenson had a ruddy face, wispy gray hair, and an even gaze. I always told Shwe that his voice was like the actor Mr. Heston's in that movie *Ben-Hur* we saw on the university outing in Mandalay.

"What's wrong with some nice new houses and some decent folk moving in?" Peggy Schmidt asked, lighting up a cigarette. "We could get some decent services, like garbage pickup and streetlights."

"That's just what Toby means," Mel Olafsson said. "City folk move here, build their mansions in the cornfields, pretty soon they're trotting out some fancy ideas our taxes can't handle. Streetlights? What for? We got landmarks here can make you see good enough even in the dark. Hansen's barn and them two willows at the end of Pine Grove Avenue, lady, are just like streetlights."

Peggy had not learned the power of silence as we Burmese women had, so she said loudly, "Is that so? Well, Mel Olafsson, you better do something about your cattle. I'll tell you, Tobias, you being the town chairman and all, I woke up the other day and damned if I didn't see two googly eyes floating in this moo face right outside my window. And me in my nightie! I tell you, a body has a right to look out her bedroom window and not see no cows chewing and mooing just inches away."

I prayed to the Buddha to make her silent, but she went on, talking about cow shit and smells and fresh air and country life.

Tobias scratched his chin. "Are you talking about manure?"

"You can call it by any fancy name you like, sir, shit's shit," she said. "If you ask me, Mel ought to be controlling his damn cows. And for that matter, that Cooper fellow ought to be doing the same with his place, so decent folk don't have to look at his dump."

"Mel's got to do something," Tobias agreed. "But old Coop—now, he's okay."

"Ain't so," Bettina almost shouted. "That Cooper's destroying our neighborhood. We got a right to clean countryside. Us working folk paid hard-earned money for our place, and it ain't fair our property values are falling 'cause Al Cooper's fixing vehicles and making a junkyard in our residential area."

"That's a bunch of bull," Mr. Olafsson said. "Old Coop's been fixing stuff nigh on to fifteen years, and property values been going up yearly—taxes right along with 'em."

"We'll see," Bettina said. "We got ourselves a lawyer to shut Cooper down, clean him up. It's time you guys got yourself some new laws."

I cleared my throat gently. I saw their faces turn toward me—upturned faces, so white, so pink, like a row of flowers crowding a garden. "Well, I don't see what the trouble is," I said softly, making my voice reasonable. "I've been thinking about this. First, Mr. Cooper is fixing farm vehicles on a farm. And that is allowed. How can there be a farm without tractors and trucks? And if you have them on a farm, shouldn't people be allowed to repair them? Or are farmers

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supposed to drag their broken machines to town to find a mechanic? Ambulances belong at hospitals, fire trucks at fire stations. And machinery belongs on farms. So what if it's rusty and old?"

I saw the men nodding. Tobias folded his arms and smiled. I took a sip of coffee. I was giving them the speech I'd prepared for the town meeting. But I couldn't stop now.

"Second," I said. "Mr. Cooper's been here for fifteen years. His repair business was here first, long before you, Bettina, and the others came. And if you didn't like it, why did you buy the place near him? He was here a long time back. That's a consideration, I think."

Tobias slapped his hands on the table. "Suu's darn right. We'll grandfather Coop, stick in some new language."

"Hell, he's fixing other stuff now too—not like before," Bettina said huffily. "And he's got tractors that don't work beans."

"You're out of luck, my dear," Tobias said. "Ain't no lawyer that can get around a grandfather once we take care of it."

"It ain't over yet," she said, arching her eyebrows. "We got avenues."

When we left the ranch, though, at dusk, I felt lighthearted. Tobias Swenson would fix everything, I knew, and we could return to our everyday ways. I felt so relieved that I even waved at Bettina. "Good night, see you tomorrow," I said. And she replied, "G'night."

I spent a long time at my dressing table that evening, coloring my lips and preparing for Shwe's arrival. Mr. Cooper's troubles are over, I would say to him. It's all fixed. I would walk on his back again, sweetly, as in the days before our disagreement. I no longer smelled of mink. I had shampooed and bathed with sandalwood soap; my feet were soft and smooth with fragrant oils.

Thumping music punctuated with loud yells and laughter spilled into our sitting room. Some sort of party was going on at Bettina's house. I'd seen the beer kegs in her back yard, and knots of thin, scraggly-looking men hooting and throwing stones at the taillights of Mr. Cooper's truck as he slowed for the turn near her house. Our walls flickered with the light from their bonfire.

Shwe was late. It was often that way on Friday nights. I put the rabbit stew Ruthie had given me on the stove to simmer and settled with my knitting into the armchair in Shwe's workshop. The Bishops' bonfire glowed in the windows. The blaze was bigger now, I was sure, but also more beautiful, warm, the color of a monk's robes. And when a shifting log sent sparks rising into the night like a thousand fireflies, I couldn't help sighing.

But minutes later I felt fear. The thin men I'd seen earlier were laughing and stumbling around the Bishops' yard, dragging branches and brush and heaving them onto their untamed fire with whoops. The bonfire was now as large as our Toyota; I imagined the frightening snap and pop of it. As I watched, one burning log and then another tumbled loose and rolled away, sparking, and a man in a ponytail and a denim jacket chased after them, crying, "Hey, hey!" Catching up, he emptied his beer cup onto one of the flaming limbs, making his companions giddy with laughter. The log darkened and became dull. But the other one set a patch of dry grass on fire, and three or four figures danced away from the group to stomp on the flames until they went out.

I watched the blaze from the window for a while, but then the noise of the party died down and I must have dozed. My mind enlarged and floated, twisting, losing shape. I was in a mixed-up world of pagodas and rusting tractors, silver paddies and screaming minks, and Shwe in a ceremonial silk headdress, smiling shyly at me. Soldiers were kneeling, firing at students and monks in the city streets. I heard the guns, volley after volley. Someone was banging on our front door.

I found Mr. Cooper on the porch, screaming, "Suu! Suu!" His eyes were wild.

"Dear God," I whispered. It seemed as if the darkness itself was glowing. Crimson-edged flames with yellow centers were licking and flashing from Mr. Cooper's barn. I could feel the warmth. I stood still, my breath sticking, and watched the trembling brightness rise toward the roof. Mr. Cooper yanked my shawl from the armchair then, took my hand in his, and pulled me with him into the cornfield, the earth so crumbly, so uneven, so far from the crackling barn and our house nearby.

"Goddamn careless drunks!" he raged, batting the air with his free arm. "I told Bishop to watch it, told him it was getting too damn close. We had words just outside the barn, you know, shoved each other around a bit. And all the while he had that damn cigarette dangling from his mouth. Those brainless idiots!"

It must have been sparks or embers carried on the night wind from the beautiful bonfire. Or flames creeping secretly into the dry brush, or an escaped log rolling down a small slope and smoldering against the barn. Could it have been Mr. Bishop's cigarette, forgotten, wisping smoke on the ground where they'd argued, near the paint cans and oily rags? Perhaps it was carelessness blossoming from a knot of beery anger. Who can tell about such things?

"Sons of bitches!" Mr. Cooper shouted at the sky.

I once went swimming in a shaded stream in the Sagaing hills. When I put my head underwater, undulating patterns floated above me. Swirls and curves and diamond shapes, all brilliant with sun, dark with shadows. Fish shapes darted and scattered. As we stood among the prickly cornstalks that evening, our chests heaving, my hand caught within the roughness of Mr. Cooper's palm, the black smoke rose in clouds, like plump fish in the moonless sky.

The world consisted of light and dark, of bright orange and shivery yellow, deep brown and deeper black. Trem-

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bling light played over our houses. People were shouting. Formless shapes appeared and disappeared, flitting, scattering, sometimes in the Bishops' yard, sometimes in the cornfield, sometimes in my garden. Someone yelled, "The buckets!" The bonfire still burned, but it was a tiny thing now compared with the flames furious above the barn. The ponytailed man was swaying drunkenly near our honeysuckle, a watering can in his hand. Perhaps that was my imagination, perhaps not. Popping sounds filled the air as something in the barn exploded. The heat! Mr. Cooper dragged me farther into the field.

From somewhere far off came the thin sound of sirens, and I thought I heard people sighing "Oh" very loudly, all of them together, like wind in the firs. And someone was laughing, and someone else was saying, "Ain't nothing to laugh about." Then a woman's voice: "Serves him right." And a man—Mr. Bishop, I thought—snarled, "What you dragging your feet for, damn it? Get the other hose from the house." And Bettina—it had to have been—said, "What for? I ain't feeling like helping him." And Mr. Bishop, his voice cracking, screamed, "Move your ass, damn it! We got to hose down her place. She's the closest." Then he yelled again, "Move! Our quarrel ain't with her."

I must have tried to run home then, because I remember Mr. Cooper gripping my arms as I broke free from the rustling, slashing cornstalks. "Stay here," he said sharply. "I'm going to help the others."

"Your barn," I said.

"Yes," he said, pushing me urgently back into the lumpy field.

I felt the ends of my *longyi* flutter in a gust. The sound of the fire was like the throaty growl of a distant waterfall. The air felt charged, hot and dry. I wondered how far sparks could travel on the easy wind, and how quickly dead vines and fallen leaves and old shingles would ignite. Would the colors change if the fire found Shwe's carvings, his Glass Palace of long-ago worlds? They were so pretty, those pine figures, painted parrot green and gold, royal blue and lacquer red. Then a man coughed. "Look at her go," he said, his raspy voice reverent.

Tall, so tall. The towers of red-orange heat tapering into threads of smoke, reaching high into the night sky. I saw the stars.

"In the refugee camp in Thailand," I said, "we lined up for blankets. We lined up for rice."

"I know," Mr. Cooper said. And then he ran for the garden hose.

Geeta Sharma Jensen has an MFA from Bennington Writing Seminars. This story took first place in the Fiction category of The Atlantic*'s 2001 student writing competition.*

AMATEUR ICONOGRAPHY: RESURRECTION

Jesus is back—he's harvesting the dead.
He's pulling them up out of the dirt like leeks—
By the scruff of the neck, by the wispy hair on the head,
Like bulbs in darkness sallowly starting to grow

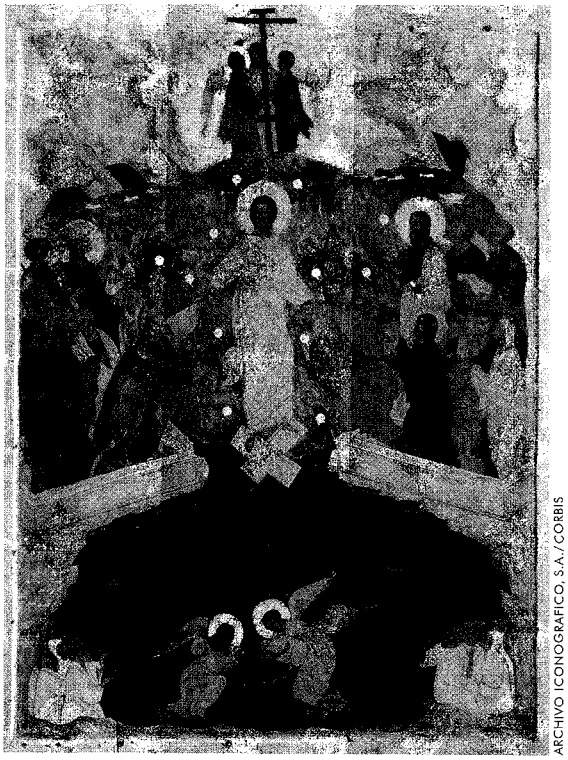
From deep down in the earth where the lost things go—
Keys and locks, small change, old hinges, nails.
(That's why the living beseech the dead, who know
Where missing objects lie.) Jesus has a grip

On Adam by the left wrist—he will not slip—
And Eve, by her right. They're groggy and don't understand,
They died so long ago. With trembling lip,
Adam surveys the crowds of new people. And Eve

Looks up the emptiness of her limp left sleeve
For the hand that was unforgiven and is no more,
Ages since withered to dust, and starts to grieve
The sinister loss, recalling the heft in that hand

Of the flesh of the fruit, and the lightness at the core.

—A. E. STALLINGS



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A. E. Stallings is an American poet who lives in Athens. Her first collection of poetry, Archaic Smile *(1999), won the Richard Wilbur Award.*

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BOOKS & CRITICS

THIS MONTH:

The Permanent Adolescent
"[Evelyn] Waugh's mastery is most often shown by the light flick with which he could switch between the funny and the sinister." Christopher Hitchens considers Waugh's "novels" and "entertainments."
PAGE 107

The Baby Experts
If new parents had time to read Ann Hulbert's *Raising America* or Peter N. Stearns's *Anxious Parents*, "they might see themselves less as lonely buffoons in some ill-fated sociological experiment than as archetypes in an American drama that's been going on for a long time." Sandra Tsing Loh reviews two new books on parenting.
PAGE 118

Time Travel
Monkey Hunting, by Cristina García, reviewed by Margot Livesey
PAGE 123

Dangerous Cravings
Bay of Souls, by Robert Stone, reviewed by Thomas Mallon
PAGE 123

Not Green, Not Red, Not Pink
"For the hundred years since his death 'Oscar Wilde' has meant less an oeuvre than a study in reputation; and even now disentangling the man from tendentious interpretation is a tricky job." Geoffrey Wheatcroft looks anew at the life of Britain's most notorious playwright.
PAGE 125

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

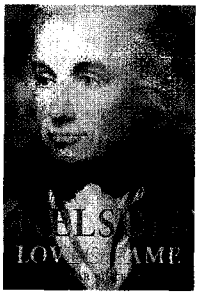
What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

Nelson and Churchill are their country's greatest heroes. These men, in their turn, bore the pre-eminent responsibility for successfully thwarting the two greatest threats of invasion Britain has faced since the Spanish Armada. Both combined supreme self-confidence with a remarkable—if often winsome—emotional immaturity. Both had stalwart courage and a flair for the theatrical. Both were masters of self-promotion, yet while they frantically pursued fame, both scrupulously ensured that others received the credit they deserved. Both coined gallant phrases that will forever define their nation's best self (Nelson's "England expects that every man will do his duty" is by far the most famous maritime signal in history). But only Nelson—who lost an arm, his vision in one eye, and ultimately his life in combat—was an audacious and brilliant leader of men in epic battles. Only Nelson could sway and inspire—and dominate— others with his charm. And only Nelson maintained a lasting and intense love affair with perhaps the greatest beauty of his age, Emma Hamilton. Vincent's extraordinary work does justice to this extraordinary man. He writes in his introduction that a biographer must approach his subject "with empathy and a forensic attitude," and the author's sharp, skeptical intelligence sets this book apart. Alas, nearly all other giant historical biographies (this one is more than 600 pages) merely assemble lists and facts, chronicling their subjects' lives in great detail but with little insight. Vincent, whose book is based almost entirely on primary sources, has researched prodigiously, but he doesn't let events, letters, or diary entries speak for themselves; rather, he interprets, shapes, and dissects the historical material, which renders his biography consistently—and again, alas, almost uniquely—engaging. Whether probing Nelson's conduct of the Battles of Saint Vincent, the Nile, Copenhagen, and Trafalgar; or showing how his astonishingly successful leadership was based on his recognition of the need among all his men "for self-respect, for fairness, and for justice" (Vincent's is the most astute study I've read of the various aspects of military leadership—strategic and operational as well as managerial); or revealing Nelson's character and attitude toward the Navy in an analysis of the contrast between him and the equally dashing, humane, and daring Lord Cochrane (who was a far less effective organization man);

THE EDITOR'S CHOICE



NELSON: LOVE & FAME
by Edgar Vincent
Yale

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or assessing Nelson's insecurities as revealed in his letters to Hamilton; or illuminating how Nelson's account of Copenhagen displayed both his courage and his "singular capacity for making sure that what he had done was not overlooked," Vincent writes with fluency and deploys his evidence with keen analytical ability and storytelling skill. He has written a great biography and a poignant love story; his last sentence will break your heart.

ARCHITECTURE

RAPHAEL SORIANO, *by Wolfgang Wagener* (Phaidon). Wagener's detailed, clearly written, and exquisitely illustrated study of the work of the mid-twentieth-century architect Raphael Soriano is a paean to the vanished middle-class, egalitarian Los Angeles. On the eve of the Second World War no other city in America was so democratic (it could be argued), because in no other city was the freestanding, single-family house so predominant. And in no other city was the middle-class housing stock so architecturally distinguished; the California bungalow, which two architectural historians have called "the closest thing to a democratic art that has ever been produced," flourished there. By the mid-1940s a number of the city's most distinguished architects—including Soriano, Richard Neutra, Charles and Ray Eames, Eero Saarinen, and Soriano's protégés Pierre Koenig and Craig Ellwood—recognized that the techniques and materials of the war industries, especially the aeronautical industry, could be used to design and build a new type of affordable and beautiful house for southern California's swelling population. They were enlisted in the Case Study House program (1945–1966), which aimed to build avant-garde Modernist family homes on a bourgeois budget. Marked by a fluidity of indoor and outdoor space (the Case Study architects, Soriano in particular, were adept at interweaving rooms and patios), and built largely of glass framed in lightweight steel, these clean-lined houses also managed (unlike Philip Johnson's and Mies van der Rohe's soulless domestic glass boxes back east) to be jaunty, relaxed, and remarkably livable. Soriano's work was the apotheosis of the Case Study House ideals. Like his mentors Rudolf Schindler and Neutra, Soriano molded the understated, pure Modernist aesthetic to the climate and good life of southern California. But he was equally attentive to cost and to the need for easy and fast construction, and was hence imaginative and innovative in his frequent use of prefabricated, industrial, and off-the-shelf materials. This book places Soriano's designs in the cultural, political, and economic context of postwar southern California, and it keenly assesses both his breezy, family-friendly houses and his contribution to the Case Study movement (his pioneering use of steel module frames eliminated the need for interior, load-bearing walls and resulted in the open floor plans that became a distinguishing feature of the program's houses). But Wagener's most impressive feat is his revealing use of photographs, notably those by the great architectural photographer Julius Shulman. (Shulman's beguiling nighttime photograph of two women in cocktail dresses sitting in Case Study House #22, which seems to hover above the lights of the San Fernando Valley, is an iconic image of modern architecture.) Shulman has always seemed especially sensitive to Soriano's vision, perhaps because he has now lived for more than half a century in a house designed by the architect.

LITERARY STUDIES

AS OF THIS WRITING, *by Clive James* (Norton). James is among the very small number of great critics writing today—a group that includes Martin Amis, Peter Ackroyd, John Updike, Gore Vidal, and Christopher Hitchens. All write with verve and recklessness, which they combine with extraordinary erudition. All are imbued with what James calls "the spirit of Grub Street"—all, that is, write in "the tradition of supplying a supplement and a corrective to … the dust contractors of the universities." The authors and subjects he examines in this collection of "essays"—really review essays—range from Nabokov to Judith Krantz, from Richard Nixon's

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memoirs to the Final Solution; from Stevie Smith to Peter Bogdanovich, from Philip Larkin to Marilyn Monroe. (Among and within his pieces James artfully juxtaposes the high and the low—a tendency he shares with Ackroyd. Both men have been regular television critics.) He is penetrating on all these (especially Larkin), but I find him most astute and heartfelt in his assessments of his fellow literary journalists. His celebrated 1972 essay on Edmund Wilson remains the most trenchant appreciation of both the critic's writing ("Wilson's style adopted the Mencken-Nathan toughness but eschewed the belligerence—throwing no punches, it simply put its points and waited for intelligent men to agree") and his peculiar point of view as a "patrician individualist," revolted by the fact that "the Republic he loved began to be overwhelmed by the Democracy he had never been sure about." He hits the mark in his evaluation of Vidal, whom he rightly regards as Wilson's "natural heir," who "just knows a lot, possesses an unusual amount of common sense and writes scrupulously lucid prose"—but whose critical honesty is hobbled by his "thirst for glamour." And James is equally incisive on Susan Sontag, who, he writes, "conspicuously lacks the one quality every critic must have and an excellent critic must have in abundance: the capacity not to be carried away by a big idea." His piece on Orwell, however (who not only made political writing an art but, James correctly avers, "is the first person to read on Swift, on Dickens, and on Gissing"), is the best here, and among the best considerations of that author ever written. Sure, James praises Orwell's style and its "irresistible force of assertion," but far more valuably, he takes apart Orwell's sentences to show us how he created conversational prose like a windowpane. And James succinctly tells us why to read Orwell, why to be wary of him, and why to revere him: "Not even Orwell could resist a resonant statement that fudged the facts—a clarity that is really an opacity. Yes, Orwell did write like an angel, and that's the very reason we have to watch him like a hawk. Luckily for us, he was pretty good at watching himself. He was blessed with a way of putting things that made everything he said seem so, but that was only a gift. His intellectual honesty was a virtue."

AWE FOR THE TIGER, LOVE FOR THE LAMB, *edited by Rod Preece* (Routledge). This intelligently edited, deeply researched anthology presents a wealth of writing, from antiquity to the beginning of the twentieth century, on compassion toward animals. Despite the expressions of pity it contains, it is largely a history of obduracy, casual cruelty, and sadism. Although in the 1600s the rational and scientific René Descartes performed experiments on dogs that could only be described as psychopathological, a seemingly modern sympathy for animals, and a revulsion for humanity's brutality toward them, goes back to Plutarch and Lucretius. But Preece's compilation clearly shows that an ethical revolution took place in nineteenth-century Britain—a society that explored with rigor, moral imagination, and (of course) earnestness both the fact of human beings' viciousness toward other creatures and the idea of humanity's obligation to animal welfare. It is an intellectual feat that remains impressive today. (Certain progressives who cultivate a cheap toughness say they can't muster any sympathy for cute furry creatures so long as human beings anywhere are oppressed. Lest they sneer at Victorian sentimentalism and hypocrisy, they should be reminded that many of those who championed animal protection also led the fights against the slave trade and child labor and abuse.) Preece's anthology—half of which is devoted to nineteenth-century (mostly British) writers—can be approached equally as a literary anthology and a historical one, because it contains selections not only from Bentham, Mill, and Darwin, but also from Sheridan, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Christina Rossetti, the Brontës, Dickens, Hardy, Stevenson, John Henry Newman, Ruskin, Lewis Carroll, Shaw, Twain, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky. Readers may want to pair it with James Turner's insightful history *Reckoning With the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind*, recently reissued by Johns Hopkins University Press.

ERIC HANSON

HISTORY

THE COURSE OF GERMAN HISTORY, *by A.J.P. Taylor* (Routledge). Taylor was, to appropriate the title of his favorite among his books, a troublemaker. Provocative and showy, his arguments annoyed complacent historians and angered readers wedded to the conventional wisdom. No twentieth-century historian wrote with more brio or precision. None so thoroughly cut through cant and qualifications to render truly brilliant and usually unsettling—and often highly debatable—judgments. This book, first published in 1945 and recently brought back into print, was his first best seller. A lucid survey of German history from 1792 to the outbreak of the Second World War, it's really an elegant, interpretive historical essay, which is more rewarding (and occasionally exasperating) the more the reader knows about the subject. The book—which discerned continuities in German history and argued that Nazi foreign policy wasn't an aberration but merely an extreme expression of Germany's drive for the mastery of Central and Eastern Europe—was and remains enormously controversial. And, of course, Taylor courted controversy, from his celebrated opening sentences ("The history of Germany is a history of extremes. It contains

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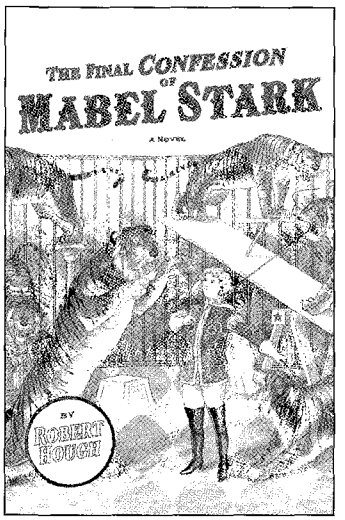

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everything except moderation, and in the course of a thousand years the Germans have experienced everything except normality") through his frequent epigrammatic summaries ("No one can understand the Germans who does not appreciate their anxiety to learn from, and to imitate, the West; but equally, no one can understand Germans who does not appreciate their determination to exterminate the East"). But the subsequent scholarship of Hans Gatzke, Fritz Fishcher, Immanuel Geiss, and Taylor himself (in *The Origins of the Second World War*) testifies to the cogency—if not the correctness—of his interpretation of "the German problem." More important, this book still contains the most concise, intelligent, and pungent assessments in English of, among many other topics, the revolutions of 1848, the impotence—and therefore the historical irrelevance—of German liberalism, Bismarck's and Stresemann's strategies, and the irrationality of Tirpitz's "risk fleet" ("Nothing could better express the roaring spluttering energy of Germany, like a ship's propeller out of water, than this vast naval force, absorbing great quantities of economic power, engendering disastrous international friction, destined never to be used to any decisive purpose in war, but to perform a role in history only as the match which began the explosion and collapse of the Hohenzollern Reich"). Taylor's work is a model of stylish, scintillating compression. This edition is part of an important publishing venture—the Routledge Classics series, which brings out unusually handsome paperback reissues of often neglected seminal works of twentieth-century sociology, psychology, history, philosophy, and criticism.

THE FIRST DAY ON THE SOMME, *by Martin Middlebrook* (Penguin/Trafalgar Square). July 1, 1916, is the bloodiest day in Britain's history. At seven-thirty that morning an unbroken line of British soldiers along an eighteen-mile section of the Western Front climbed out of their trenches and began to advance slowly and methodically toward the German positions, which were in some places less than 200 yards away. By dusk the British had suffered more than 57,000 casualties; 20,000 men were dead, and three of every four officers had been killed or wounded. On that day the British people suffered their most profound national trauma, from which in many ways they have yet to recover. Middlebrook minutely reconstructed the first day of the four-month Battle of the Somme, using letters, diaries, division and battalion histories, and above all the testimony of more than 500 British soldiers who had survived. His book, published in 1971 and now back in print, remains one of the most innovative and harrowing works of military history ever written. In the past ten years a number of historians, notably Tim Travers, have with great sophistication reassessed British strategy and tactics on the Western Front. This new crop of books supplements but doesn't supersede Middlebrook's microhistory. It's still the definitive account of that day of slaughter, and the most unsentimental yet heartbreaking appreciation of the British infantrymen—stolid, sardonic, comradely—who fought and died in the Great War.

THE ANTI-SEMITIC MOMENT, *by Pierre Birnbaum* (Hill and Wang). This meticulous account of the anti-Semitic hysteria that swept France in 1898—engendered by the Dreyfus affair and encouraged by the Catholic Church—makes for terrifying and fascinating reading. Terrifying because Birnbaum, who has mined local archives and police records, explicates the size and ferocity of the frequently violent mobs (often chanting and fueled by genocidal slogans) that attacked Jewish businesses and neighborhoods throughout France; fascinating because his often gripping chronicle is social history at its best, showing how these demonstrations spread to the cities, towns, and even villages of every section of the country. But the great surprise is that for all the savagery of the rhetoric and the viciousness of the crowds, no Jews (except in Algeria) were killed. The forces of order, although hardly philo-Semitic, stanched the furor and ultimately, if imperfectly, upheld the law.

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor of The Atlantic

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THE PERMANENT ADOLESCENT

His vices made Evelyn Waugh a king of comedy and of tragedy

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

.....

Even as George Orwell was dying, in 1949, he continued to wrestle with the last book review to which the life of the freelance hack had condemned him. Dogged to the final deadline, he also made some more-general notes about that novel's author. The book was *Brideshead Revisited*, and the author was Orwell's exact contemporary, whose centennial is also being observed this year. We now have Orwell's fragmented, unfinished comments on Evelyn Waugh, and they certainly infuse me with a strong wish to have been able to read the completed essay.

> Within the last few decades, in countries like Britain or the United States, the literary intelligentsia has grown large enough to constitute a world in itself. One important result of this is that the opinions which a writer feels frightened of expressing are not those which are disapproved of by society as a whole. To a great extent, what is still loosely thought of as heterodoxy has become orthodoxy. It is nonsense to pretend, for instance, that at this date there is something daring and original in proclaiming yourself an anarchist, an atheist, a pacifist, etc. The daring thing, or at any rate the unfashionable thing, is to believe in God or to approve of the capitalist system. In 1895, when Oscar Wilde was jailed, it must have needed very considerable moral courage to defend homosexuality. Today it would need no courage at all: today the equivalent action would be, perhaps, to defend antisemitism. But this example that I have chosen immediately reminds one of something else—namely, that one cannot judge the value of an opinion simply by the amount of courage that is required in holding it.

This manuscript peters out after a few more shrewd paragraphs, and is succeeded by some cryptic notes on *Brideshead*:

> Analyse "Brideshead Revisited." (Note faults due to being written in first person.) Studiously detached attitude. Not puritanical. Priests not superhuman ... *But.* Last scene, where the unconscious man makes the sign of the Cross. Note that after all the veneer is bound to crack sooner or later. One cannot really be Catholic and grown-up.
>
> Conclude. Waugh is about as good a novelist as one can be (i.e. as novelists go today) while holding untenable opinions.

Tantalizing as this may be, in conceding that moral courage may be shown by reactionaries or good prose produced by snobs, it does not make the leap of imagination that is required to state the obvious: that Waugh wrote as brilliantly as he did precisely *because* he loathed the modern world. Orwell identified "snobbery" and "Catholicism" as Waugh's "driving forces," and so they were. But the first of his miniature masterpieces, *Decline and Fall*, was composed before Waugh joined Holy Mother Church. It contains a piece of absolutely hilarious rudeness and bad taste, directed at one of the world's most innocuous minorities—the Welsh.

> "The Welsh character is an interesting study," said Dr Fagan. "I have often considered writing a little monograph on the subject, but I was afraid it might make me unpopular in the village. The ignorant speak of them as Celts, which is of course wholly erroneous. They are of pure Iberian stock—the aboriginal inhabitants of Europe who survive only in Portugal and the Basque district. Celts readily intermarry

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with their neighbors and absorb them. From the earliest times the Welsh have been looked upon as an unclean people. It is thus that they have preserved their racial integrity. Their sons and daughters rarely mate with humankind except their own blood relations. In Wales there was no need for legislation to prevent the conquering people intermarrying with the conquered ..."

Much of the remainder of Waugh's iridescent first novel is imbued with the same breezy, heartless spirit, which recurs memorably in *Black Mischief*, *Scoop*, and *The Loved One*. And most of the delicious elements that were his hallmarks are present from the beginning. There is an innocent abroad; one might call him Candide if the Voltairean association were not obtuse. There are many ancillary characters who act without conscience and don't mind admitting it, and who don't seem to suffer in consequence. (The awful subtexts of *Decline and Fall* are pederasty and prostitution, and I remember being quite astounded when I was first introduced to the novel, at the age of twelve, by a boarding-school master who later had to be hastily taken away.) There is a fine English country house that is threatened with decay or demolition—in this instance the Tudor mansion King's Thursday, to be ravaged by a Bauhaus barbarian.

That last observation prompts another—namely, Waugh's familiarity with the outlines of the emerging modernity that he came to detest. Aesthetically he was one of the earliest to register the effect of T. S. Eliot and *The Waste Land*. In *Brideshead Revisited*, Anthony Blanche reads the Tiresias section of that poem through a megaphone; the title of *A Handful of Dust* is annexed directly from one of Eliot's more ominous stanzas (the whole stanza appears on Waugh's title page).

This brings us eventually to the matter of Roman Catholicism. In *Decline and Fall*, Waugh treated all devotional matters as the raw material of farce. But the concept of a capricious cosmos was already jostling in his mind with the notion of original sin. Thus, in that book a little boy named Lord Tangent (the son of Lord and Lady Circumference: Waugh both ridiculed and revered the nomenclature of English nobility) is grazed by a bullet during a sporting event, is reported as having had his foot turn black, and is subsequently said to have suffered first amputation and then death. All this is deadpan, callous humor, most of it offstage, as if Waugh half believed in those Fates that animated Greek drama and did not stop to explain themselves. As his work progresses, however, dreadful outcomes seem to be connected to a warped idea of divine justice. Basil Seal, in *Black Mischief*, doesn't actually *know* that he is eating his old girlfriend at a cannibal repast, but it's in the ironic nature of things that he should be dining in this way. In *Brideshead*, Sebastian Flyte squanders his beauty and charm on alcohol and indigence, and eventually in masochistic self-sacrifice, because he has been rashly fleeing the vocation for the priesthood that his elder brother would have so humbly welcomed.

In *Decline and Fall*, Waugh treated all devotional matters as the raw material of farce. But the concept of a capricious cosmos was already jostling in his mind with the notion of original sin.

Waugh was not a mere propagandist, and we would not still be reading him if he had been. The ends that he reserves for the meek and the worthy and the innocent are condemnations of the worldly and the vain, as surely as in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, but they are also highly diverting for their own sake. William Boot, in *Scoop*, is given a thorough drubbing by reality the moment he risks leaving the shelter of Boot Magna Hall, his bucolic den. Tony Last, in *A Handful of Dust*, is a doomed man once he agrees to give up his country seat of Hetton and embark on a venture of overseas exploration. The element of what we glibly call *noir* is a fluctuating one: both Boot and Last (cobbler's names) are treated with extraordinary cruelty by the women they love, but the outcomes are arranged along the spectrum between pity and terror. Waugh's mastery is most often shown by the light flick with which he could switch between the funny and the sinister. And the delicacy of this touch is shown by the breathtaking deftness with which he handled profane subjects. I have already mentioned that the gross pedophilia of *Decline and Fall* is so artfully suggested that an adolescent might read it unawares. And many adult reviewers of *Brideshead* have somehow managed to describe it as a languorous evocation of the "platonic" nature of English undergraduate affection.

But toying with his innocents, and showing how cleverly and suddenly their creator could bring them low, was for Waugh part of a serious mandate. He wanted to bring the Book of Job to life for those who had never read, or who feared, it. And he chose a time—the mid twentieth century—when the Church he had joined was very plainly marked not just with a nostalgia for the days of Thomas More or even of Thomas Aquinas but by a reactionary modernity of its own. It is for this reason, I propose, that Waugh and Eliot still seem fresh while G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc appear quaint and antique. The plain fact is that both felt and transmitted some of the mobilizing energy of fascism.

The tweedy, fogy types who make an affectation of Waugh are generally fondest of his almost camp social conservatism: his commitment to stuffy clubs, "home" rather than "abroad," old clothes, traditional manners, ear trumpets, rural hierarchy, ancient liturgy, and the rest of it. Their master ministered very exactly to this taste in the undoubted self-parody that adorns *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* and is titled "Portrait of the Artist in Middle Age."

His strongest tastes were negative. He abhorred plastics, Picasso, sunbathing, and jazz—everything in fact that had happened in his own lifetime. The tiny kindling of charity which came to him through his religion sufficed only to temper his disgust and change it to boredom. There was a phrase in the thirties: "It is later than you think", which was designed to cause uneasiness. It was never later than Mr Pinfold thought.

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His face eventually grew to fit this mask, but Waugh had been very much "of" the Jazz Age, and brought it hectically to life, most notably in *Vile Bodies* and *Brideshead*. Sexual experiments, fast cars, modern steamships and aeroplanes—these, plus a touch of experience with modern warfare, gave him an edge that the simple, fusty reactionaries did not possess. Thus he celebrated Mussolini's conquest of Abyssinia as in part a victory for progress and development, defended Franco's invasion of Spain as a stand for tradition and property, and, in his travel book *Robbery Under Law*, denounced the Mexico of Cárdenas as an anti-clerical socialist kleptocracy. On some things he was conservative by instinct. (He always abominated, for example, the very idea of the United States of America.) But the dynamic element in modernism was not foreign to him, much as he later liked to pretend otherwise. And he made excellent use of this tension in his writing.

Another tension or contradiction also occurs in both the life and the work. Waugh was a celebrated misanthrope and an obvious misogynist, capable of alarming and hateful bouts of anger and cruelty toward friends, children, and colleagues. When his friend Clarissa Churchill married a divorced man, he wrote to her saying that she had deliberately intensified "the loneliness of Calvary." During his wartime service—which, it must be said, was often conspicuous for its gallantry—he almost had to be protected from assassination at the hands of the soldiers under his command. Permanently injured by the flagrant adultery of his first wife, and almost certainly a badly repressed homosexual, he made a living example of Cyril Connolly's "Theory of Permanent Adolescence," whereby Englishmen of a certain caste are doomed to re-enact their school days. The vices of the boy are notably unappealing in the grown man, and Waugh was frequently upbraided for the apparent contrast between his extreme nastiness and his ostentatious religiosity. To this he famously replied (to Nancy Mitford) that nobody could imagine how horrible he would be if he were *not* a Catholic. A nice piece of casuistry, but not one that bears much scrutiny. In at least two cases—his support for the Croatian Fascist party during his wartime stint in the Balkans, and his animosity toward Jews—there was a direct connection between his spleen and his faith. And in at least two of the novels, *Helena* (which is based on the life of the early Christian empress of that name) and *Brideshead*, the narrative is made ridiculous by a sentimental and credulous approach to miracles or the supernatural. This is what Orwell meant by the incompatibility of faith with maturity.

A further proof of this point, from a somewhat different angle, might be Waugh's lamentable inability to write about sex, along with his insistence on trying to do so. A properly reticent traditionalist should have avoided the topic altogether, or dealt with it by the faintest possible allusion. Waugh once tried to take refuge in a Jamesian hideout, stating rather too finally that "our language took form during the centuries when the subject was not plainly handled with the result that we have no vocabulary for the sexual acts which is not quaintly antiquated, scientific or grossly colloquial." Never mind what Chaucer or Shakespeare or Swift or Burns or Byron might have made of that piece of evasion; the fact is that Waugh knew his readers and also knew that they employed pungent and emphatic and sometimes hilarious words for the obvious. Thus there is no conceivable excuse for passages like this one:

> It was no time for the sweets of luxury; they would come, in their season, with the swallow and the lime-flowers. Now on the rough water there was a formality to be observed, no more. It was as though a deed of conveyance of her narrow loins had been drawn and sealed.

Or this one:

> The silk rustled again as though falling to the ground. "It's best to make sure, isn't it, darling, before we decide anything? It may just be an idea of yours that you're in love with me. And you see, Paul, I like you so very much, it would be a pity to make a mistake, wouldn't it?"

Or this:

> No sign or hint betrayed their distress but when the last wheels rolled away and they mounted to their final

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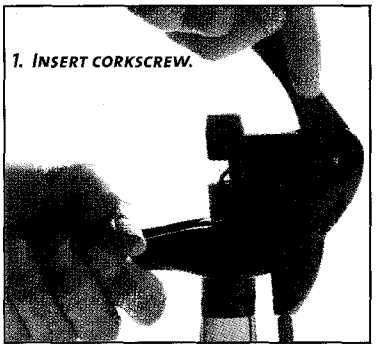

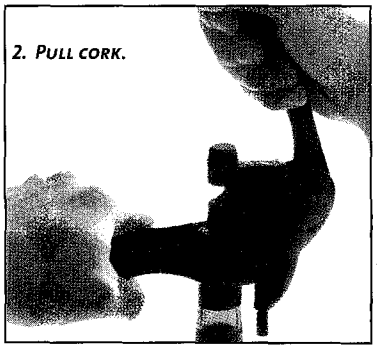

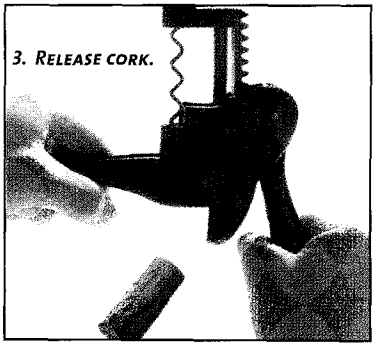

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privacy, there was a sad gap between them, made by modesty and tenderness, which neither spoke of except in prayer. Later they joined a yacht at Naples and steamed slowly up the coast, putting in at unfrequented harbours. And there, one night in their state room, all at last came right between them and their love was joyfully completed.

The writhe-making aspects of these passages (drawn, respectively, from *Brideshead Revisited*, *Decline and Fall*, and *Men at Arms*) are in bold contrast to the somewhat swaggering and sniggering mentions of surreptitious sex in Waugh's posthumously published *Diaries*. Evidently, he distrusted either his readers or himself, or perhaps both, when it came to the fictional crux. I admit that I found the second passage powerfully erotic when I first read it—but I was then under monastic tutelage and worse, and was, as I have said, only twelve. It's somewhat confirming to read of Waugh's rather bizarre second marriage, to an odd woman who bore him numerous children with no great evidence of relish on her part or pride on his—as if, indeed, offspring were to be regarded as random gifts, wanted or unwanted, from the divine. (By what is perhaps an unconscious inversion of the same dispensation, Waugh makes most of his protagonists into orphans or half orphans, missing at least one parent.) "Family values," too tedious for straight depiction, nonetheless had to be upheld for reasons of propriety.

There is evidence that he knew not to push this kind of religiosity too far. In a conversation between Waugh and Graham Greene, recorded by Christopher Sykes, Greene described the plot of his then impending novel *The Quiet American*, and observed that it would be "a relief not to write about God for a change." To which Waugh rejoined, "Oh, I wouldn't drop God if I were you. Not at this stage anyway. It would be like P. G. Wodehouse dropping Jeeves halfway through the Wooster series."

It is notable, for example, that none of Waugh's fictional Catholic clergy are morally impressive. (The "priests," as Orwell pointed out, are "not superhuman.") They tend to be simple-minded or (in the case of *Men at Arms*) resent-

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ful Irishmen. In *Vile Bodies* there is a caricature of a scheming, socially smooth Jesuit, but he is given the distinctly un-Romish name of Father Rothschild. We meet him carrying a suitcase that contains a false beard and "six important new books in six languages," and we learn that he has the precious gift of recalling "everything that could possibly be learned about everyone who could possibly be of any importance." To this incarnation of venality is given an astonishingly solemn short speech as the frivolity of the 1930s dies away, and the jazz band starts to pack up, and the sounds of war begin to be heard.

> "I know very few young people, but it seems to me that they are all possessed with an almost fatal hunger for permanence ... We long for peace, and fill our newspapers with conferences about disarmament and arbitration, but there is a radical instability in our whole world-order, and soon we shall all be walking into the jaws of destruction again, protesting our pacific intentions."

For the generation that was young in the 1920s and 1930s, and for whom Waugh was in some ways the blithe spirit, the unresolved question was this: Were they living in a postwar world or a pre-war one? The suppressed hysteria of this time—the echo of the preceding bloodshed and the premonition of more impending—was never captured better, except perhaps by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

If one adopts Graham Greene's distinction between "novels" and "entertainments" in his own fiction, and applies it experimentally to Waugh, then the two world wars become the crucial points of reference. *Brideshead* was published toward the end of World War II, but it evokes almost to perfection the atmosphere of Oxford just after World War I, populated by young men who are acutely conscious of having barely missed the great test of combat. This type or "set"—Paul Pennyfeather, Adam Fenwick-Symes, Ambrose Silk, Basil Seal—provides the figures of the "entertainments." Charles Ryder, in *Brideshead*, is no longer young and epicene when he becomes a junior officer and has to embrace responsibility. *Put Out More Flags* concludes with many callow and superficial former partygoers behaving better than might have been expected of them (if only to point up a contrast with W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, "Parsnip and Pimpernell," who committed what was to Waugh a double offense by avoiding military service *and* emigrating to America). Dennis Barlow, the cynical protagonist of *The Loved One*, has learned the craft of poetry in the British Army from 1939 to 1945. (I should add that Waugh's Catholicism, however lightly or invisibly worn, was obviously a stylistic and aesthetic advantage in that novel. It enabled him to confront the sheer wasteland of a Hollywood funeral industry that idiotically, hedonistically, denied death.)

Thus, the *summa* of Waugh's effort is probably rightly held to be the wartime trilogy that he began to compose in 1951 and completed a decade later. Collectively titled *Sword of Honour*, this consists of *Men at Arms*, *Officers and Gentlemen*, and *Unconditional Surrender* or (in the U.S. edition) *The End of the Battle*. Unlike many or most of Waugh's "entertainments" (to which I would add some of the imperishable "original sin" short stories, including "Mr Loveday's Little Outing"), this trilogy cannot be read at a sitting. Nor do very many of its passages commit themselves virtually to memory, like the descriptions of William Boot's telegraphese in *Scoop*, or the Welsh silver band in *Decline and Fall*. I postponed re-reading it with definite anticipation, which wasn't enough by itself to account for my disappointment.

Of course there is an ancient English Catholic family, with an endangered English country house. The names—Crouchback for the family and Broome for the house—are well up to Waugh's standard. War is coming, and the young Crouchback hears the call of the bugle. But—and this makes him nearly unique in modern English writing—he is not really convinced of the justice of his country's cause. Britain is potentially allied with communism against not just Nazism but Christendom. Guy Crouchback, we learn, is quite reconciled to fascism in Italy, and indifferent to the fate of Czechoslovakia. He is only mo-

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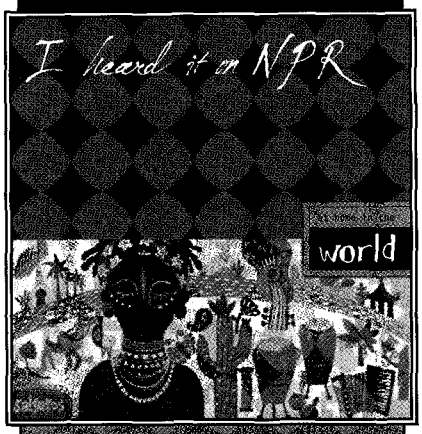

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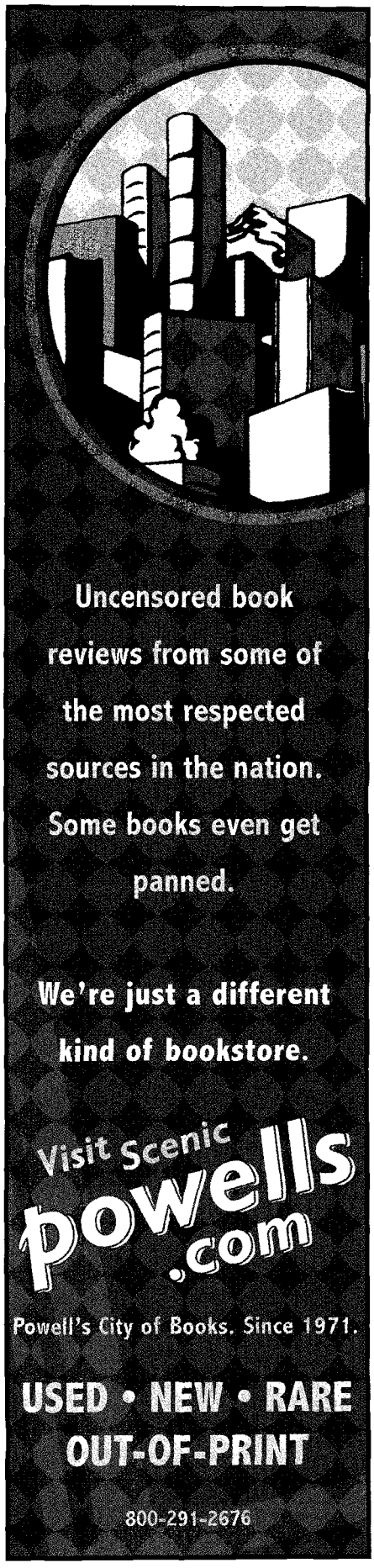

mentarily cheered by the news of the Nazi-Soviet pact: "The enemy at last was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off. It was the Modern Age in arms. Whatever the outcome there was a place for him in that battle."

With these divided loyalties he prays at the shrine of a Crusader knight and sets off to enlist. ("Sometimes he imagined himself serving the last Mass for the last Pope in a catacomb at the end of the world.") Yet, starting out in well-trodden territory, we find ourselves kept within its bounds. The image of the desolate shrine is from the closing pages of *Brideshead*. Crouchback's disastrous choice of a wife, and her subsequent desertion of him, are very like Waugh's own experience—and reminiscent of the agony faced by Tony Last in *A Handful of Dust*. Arthur Box-Bender's fatuous complacency about the Nazis is lifted straight from Rex Mottram's in *Brideshead* ("The Germans are short of almost every industrial essential. As soon as they realise that Mr Hitler's bluff has been called, we shan't hear much more of Mr Hitler") and in both cases the bluster is put into the mouth of a pro-Churchill Tory politician. Having joined his regiment, Guy begins to experience "something he had missed in boyhood, a happy adolescence," which is almost precisely what Charles Ryder says of his affair with Sebastian Flyte. Guy's fellow officer Sarum-Smith makes exactly the calculation about wartime service—that it will do him good when the time comes to return to life in business—that Hooper announces in *Brideshead*. Guy compares his love for and disillusionment with the army to a marriage, exactly as Ryder does. And this is all in the first eighty pages or so of *Men at Arms*. In most of the instances I have cited, the preceding books phrased it better.

In *Brideshead*, Ryder reflects,

> Here my last love died ... as I lay in that dark hour, I was aghast to realise that something within me, long sickening, had quietly died, and felt as a husband might feel, who, in the fourth year of his marriage, suddenly knew that he had no longer any desire, or tenderness, or esteem, for a once-beloved wife; no pleasure in her company, no wish to please, no curiosity about anything she might ever do or say or think; no hope of setting things right, no self-reproach for the disaster. I knew it all, the whole drab compass of marital disillusion; we had been through it together, the army and I, from the first importunate courtship until now, when nothing remained to us except the chill bonds of law and duty and custom.

In *Sword of Honour*, Crouchback broods,

> Those days of lameness, he realised much later, were his honeymoon, the full consummation of his love of the Royal Corps of Halberdiers. After them came domestic routine, much loyalty and affection, many good things shared, but intervening and overlaying them all the multitudinous, sad little discoveries of marriage, familiarity, annoyance, imperfections noted, discord. Meanwhile it was sweet to wake and to lie on in bed; the spirit of the Corps lay on beside him: to ring the bell; it was in the service of his unseen bride.

The first of the dawn thoughts of these two English soldiers is latently tragic, whereas the second is mostly banal (and gives rise to the suspicion that Waugh did not truly recall the first even while he was carpentering the second).

The cause of this depression in the narrator, and perhaps of the routine and repetition in the author's prose, is disclosed quite early on. Guy sits in a warm officers' mess, far, "immeasurably far, from the frontier of Christendom where the great battle had been fought and lost; from those secret forests where the trains were, even then, while the Halberdiers and their guests sat bemused by wine and harmony, rolling east and west with their doomed loads." Waugh's meaning soon becomes clear: "England had declared war to defend the independence of Poland. Now that country had quite disappeared and the two strongest states in the world guaranteed her extinction." This is Waugh the Catholic pessimist as well as (not quite the same thing) Waugh the Catholic reactionary. Note also that the existence of the United States as a great power is not acknowledged even latently. Indeed, almost the only appearance made by America in this wartime trilogy is in the absurd and irritating person of "The Loot"—an opprobrious nickname for an

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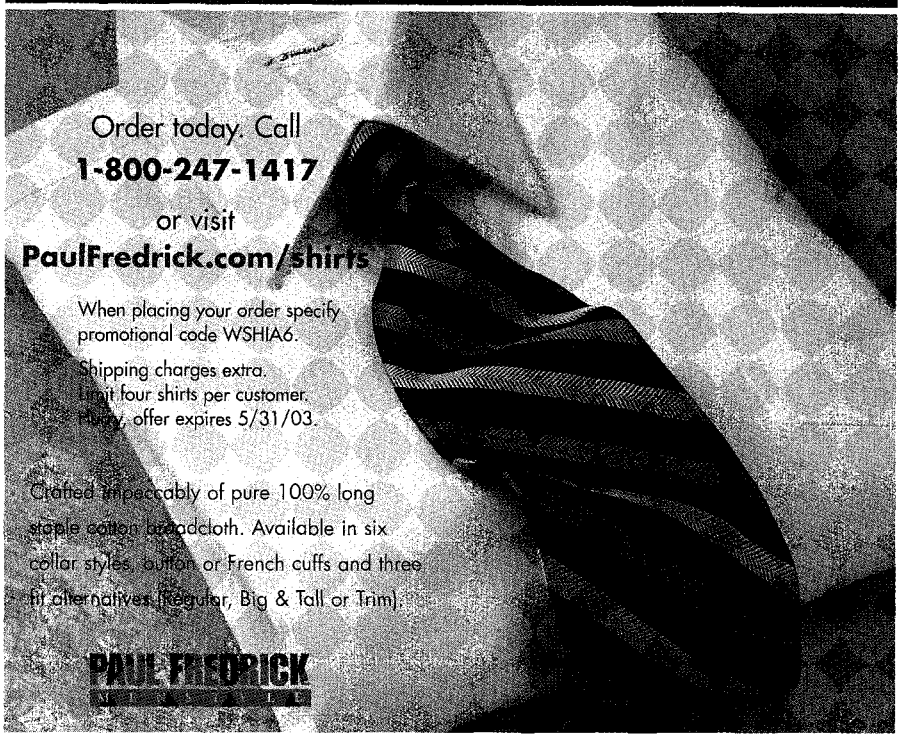

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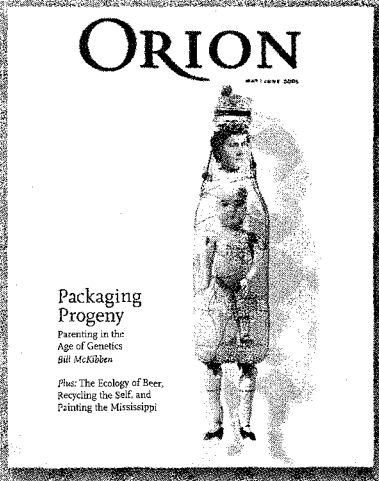

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affected and obsequious and somewhat shady American officer named Lieutenant Padfield—and of three disgusting Stateside reporters, Scab Dunz, Bum Schlum, and Joe Mulligan. The depiction of this vile trio is not a patch on the portrait of revolting journalists that appears in *Scoop*. And one might sadly observe that here Waugh's high facility for laughable yet plausible names seems to have deserted him in favor of rank crudity.

On re-reading, it also struck me as unwise for Waugh to include some of the same people and places and names —Julia Stitch, Marchmain House, the *Daily Beast*—that featured in his earlier, more fanciful works. *Sword of Honour* follows "real" historical events, from however idiosyncratic a perspective, and it is distracting to see stage characters winking from behind such imposing scenery. Indeed, it undermines the chief virtue of the trilogy, which is its rigorous portrayal of the splendors and miseries of the great calling of arms. Waugh's account of the battle for Crete, with its stark and humiliating depiction of the British army in shabby, demoralized, cowardly retreat, is one of the great passages of wartime prose. This, one says to oneself, is what defeat and shame must really have felt like. Many whiskered veterans have told me that the following is *exactly* how the return to barracks and the report to duty appeared to them:

> Guy saluted, turned about and departed only very slightly disconcerted. This was the classic pattern of army life as he had learned it, the vacuum, the spasm, the precipitation, and with it all the peculiar, impersonal, barely human geniality.

Nor did Waugh skimp on the farcical and capricious elements that are inseparable from warfare. Sometimes the humor is cruel; people die at random and in pointless ways. The figure of Guy's brother officer Apthorpe, at once pompous and pitiable, is beautifully drawn, even if it follows the outline of Captain Grimes (in *Decline and Fall*) a little too faithfully. Then there are serio-comic set pieces. At a critical moment one of Guy's soldiers asks for permission to go on leave, so that he can take part in a competition.

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"Competition for what, Shanks?"

"The slow valse, sir. We've practised together three years now. We won at Salford last year. We'll win at Blackpool, sir, I know we will. And I'll be back in the two days, honest, sir."

"Shanks, do you realise that France has fallen? That there is every likelihood of the invasion of England? That the whole railway system of the country is disorganised for the Dunkirk men? That our brigade is on two hours' notice for active service? Do you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then how can you come to me with this absurd application?"

"But, sir, we've been practising three years. We got a first at Salford last year. I can't give up now, sir."

"Request dismissed, sergeant-major."

In accordance with custom (sergeant-major) Rawkes had been waiting within view in case the applicant for a private interview attempted personal violence on his officer ... And Guy remained to wonder: was this the already-advertised spirit of Dunkirk? He rather thought it was.

In the "entertainments," however often one reads them, there is always a detail that leaps out as if for the first time. (In *Decline and Fall* applicants to an agency that supplies prep-school teachers are instructed to furnish a photograph "if considered advisable." In *Scoop*, Lord Copper is searching for an example of the lowliest among his newspaper's staff, and after a pause announces that he is "accessible to the humblest ... book reviewer.") With *Sword of Honour*, despite its flashes ("Guy felt no resentment; he was a good loser—at any rate an experienced one"), there are slower buildups, larger tracts, and, it must be said, many longueurs. Graham Greene once wrote that the opening pages of *Brideshead* seem lengthy in the memory but are brilliantly brief when, so to speak, revisited. The reverse is the case here, and that is because the state of Guy Crouchback's soul is insufficiently interesting to merit the introspection it receives. We may assume that he is Waugh (he is given the same day, month, and year of birth), and his sense of despair really does not take very long to elaborate. He believes that World War II has made his country into a corrupt, collectivized state at home and an accomplice in Bolshevism and atheism abroad. For him there has been

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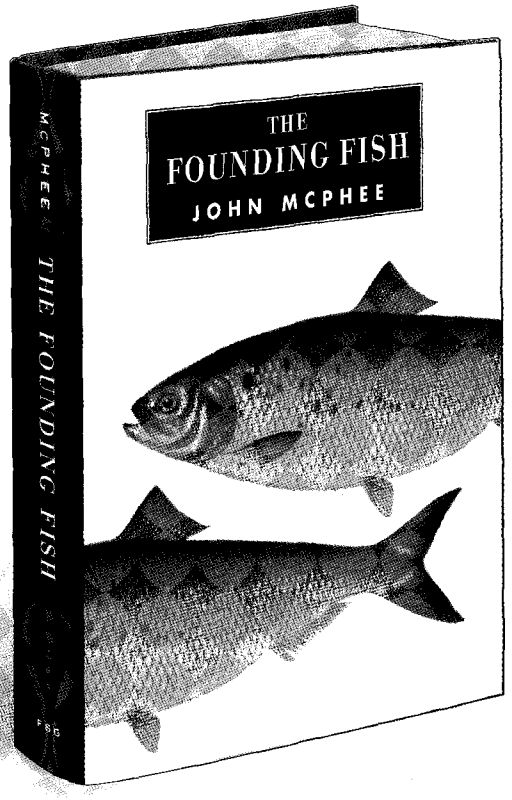

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no "Finest Hour." The very title of the trilogy is sarcastic: the only sword in the story (apart from the ancient Crusader blade next to which Guy prays) is the one made on the orders of King George VI, to be presented to Stalin in recognition of the gallantry of Soviet resistance. This, and what it represents, is to Guy a sword of dishonor. He runs into Box-Bender and is told,

> "Everything is going merrily on the eastern front."
>
> "Merrily?"
>
> "Wait for the nine o'clock news. You'll hear something then. Uncle Joe's fairly got them on the run. I shouldn't much care to be one of his prisoners."

Here Waugh condenses a vast contempt into a small space. But his revenge on Box-Bender (whose prisoner-of-war son elects to become a Catholic monk) seems all the pettier for that. The conversion to Rome of Guy's once and future wife, Virginia, is likewise mawkish and artificial, and the ludicrous character of his uncle Peregrine, obsessed with family genealogy and religious arcana, is a composite of many previous figures of fun. Only in the clever, lethal way in which he caricatured certain Anthony Blunt–like persons in the Foreign Office and the intelligence services did Waugh really succeed in landing a blow on the forces he hated.

In his private journal for February of 1944 Waugh wrote,

> The battle at Nettuno looks unpromising. It is hard to be fighting against Rome. We bombed Castel Gandolfo. The Russians now propose a partition of East Prussia. *It is a fact that the Germans now represent Europe against the world.* [Italics added]

The long and didactic closing stages of *Sword of Honour* are amazingly blatant in the utterance they give to this rather unutterable thought. Guy Crouchback regards the Yugoslav partisans as mere cyphers for Stalin, sympathizes with the local Fascists, and admires the discipline of the German occupiers. We know from many published memoirs that Waugh himself was eventually removed from this theater of operations for precisely that sort of insubordination. We also know that his first writerly trip after the German surrender was to observe the Nuremberg trials in 1946. He left the city after only two days, "finding the reality tedious," in the words of his biographer Selina Hastings. So it is slightly unsettling to find Guy Crouchback performing an act of mercy and piety, which his creator never even attempted. In a protracted and sentimental episode at the close of *Sword of Honour* he devotes himself to the rescue of a group of displaced Jews, and persists in this quixotic policy despite every variety of British official discouragement. The Jews themselves are never represented except as extras—as Guy's rather bedraggled objects of charity. There isn't any color or life or dignity to them. Is it then mistaken for one to suggest that they are included as a makeweight, or as a clumsy atonement many years later for Waugh's actual views at the time? Whatever may be the case, the passage is one of the most bogus and leaden things he ever wrote, fully materializing Orwell's earlier misgivings. And in this instance it is the suspect politics that directly occasion and condition the bad writing—which is to say, they negate the whole genius of Waugh in the first place.

Many literary careers are doomed to go on slightly longer than they should, and to outlive the author's original engrossing talent. Waugh himself lived to lament the Second Vatican Council and to deplore the abolition of the Latin mass—which meant that he became not more Catholic than the Pope but more curmudgeonly than his own confessors and more conservative than the Church itself. This has the accidentally beautiful result of making *Sword of Honour* into a literary memorial not just for a lost world but for a lost faith. In Catholic doctrine one is supposed to hate the sin and love the sinner. This can be a distinction without a difference if the "sin" is to *be* something (a Jew, a homosexual, even a divorcée) rather than to *do* something. Non-Christian charity requires, however, that one forgive Waugh precisely because it was his innate—as well as his adopted—vices that made him a king of comedy and of tragedy for almost three decades.

Christopher Hitchens writes a column for Vanity Fair. *He is the author of* Why Orwell Matters *(2002).*

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Flipping the Energy Switch to "on"...

This month I got a letter from a reader in Seattle about a "secret" that transformed her from fatigued to alive again. (For those of you who feel like it's a constant struggle just to make it through each day, you know all too well what she's talking about.)

Sarah writes:

Dear Jennie,

Last month, my husband and I were on a vacation in Georgia having dinner with a couple we had been introduced to by mutual friends. The husband happens to be a doctor who specializes in complementary medicine. During dinner we noticed how energetic and healthy this couple appeared to be. When we found out their age, we could hardly believe it. We would have guessed they were at least 10 years younger. Each of them looked to be in great physical condition.

They went on to tell us that they had a family of five children including a set of twins they had at a late age. Despite raising such a large family and maintaining a busy medical practice in which the wife was the office manager, they still made time for hiking and biking trips in addition to the occasional triathlon that the doctor would compete in during his "spare time". The couple spoke as if they were immune to the stress of everyday life and still had time to do more in a week than we've done in the last two years. Just hearing the details of their lifestyle left us exhausted. On top of that, it seemed that they truly had an incredible relationship.

I asked them what their secret was. The wife told us that her husband had been doing research with his patients on a nutritional formula containing **homeostatic nutrients** that provide the body with the crucial elements missing from our diets today. He had used them on many patients with great success. In fact, he and his wife were among the first to try them. "By adding these homeostatic nutrients to our already healthy diet and lifestyle it was like an energy switch had been turned on inside of us." My wife, myself and my patients all experienced excellent results which included improved energy and well being, more restful sleep, decreased appetite, increased sexual desire and performance, and a greater ability to adapt to stress.

Well, we were more than convinced and inquired about getting a supply for our own use. The doctor informed us that the formula containing these homeostatic nutrients was not yet available to the public, but agreed to give my husband and I some sample bottles if we would report to him our results. We excitedly agreed.

After a few days of using this formula we felt like we too were "switched on". My energy improved, I slept better, my occasional indigestion seemed to be gone, and my kids told me that I was a "nicer mommy". I must say that the best side benefit is that my husband and I are no longer exhausted at the end of the day, and it seems as if our spark has returned. My appetite and sugar cravings are greatly diminished and I feel much lighter.

Unfortunately, our supply of homeostatic nutrients has nearly run out. Do you know anything about this formula and if there is anywhere that I can purchase it?

Sincerely,
Sarah G.
Seattle, Washington

Sarah, you're in luck! It just so happens I do know about homeostatic nutrients. The formula is called **Living Multi**™ and is now available at nutrition stores and physicians offices. Living Multi is specially formulated to increase energy and performance, improve nutrition, and enhance cellular detoxification. All the people I have spoken with have confirmed that taking Living Multi everyday has noticeably resulted in improved energy levels, better sleep, a decrease in appetite and cravings, improved digestion, and a better ability to cope with stress. Many have also reported improvements in their sex life. Initial results with **Living Multi** have been so positive that this formulation is undergoing university studies to prove it's efficacy on enhancing human performance and reversing the risk factors of many degenerative diseases.

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THE BABY EXPERTS

The high anxiety of child-rearing

BY SANDRA TSING LOH

.....

On my battered Ikea night table stands a wobbly tower of self-help books. They say everything there is to know about me, an anxious fortysomething new mother. From the top they are *What to Expect the First Year*, *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*, *The Baby Book: Everything You Need to Know About Your Baby From Birth to Age Two*, *Becoming the Parent You Want to Be*, *The Girlfriends' Guide to Pregnancy*, *On Becoming Baby Wise*, *Surrendering to Motherhood*, *Your Second Child* (a book that has literally never been opened), and, yes, sign of the times, *Parenting for Dummies*. In my defense, all these books were gifts. From other, childless Los Angeles women. Guests at my baby shower, which ... oh, I remember it well. It was a Sunday lunch, with flowers, cheese, white wine for them, sparkling water for me ... They stood together for the first and last time, all my girlfriends from my twenties and thirties, with streaked hair and strappy sandals, looking wonderful ... all except the only two mothers I know, who now can never make a Sunday anything. But here the rest of them stood: Maggie from college, Sue from grad school, Jen from my writers' group ... They clinked glasses, proffered raffia-twined treasures, said their fond good-byes.

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by Peter N. Stearns
New York University

Day Six of the Baby, bent double over the bed, I found myself frantically cracking back the spine of each new "what to expect" book, exposing its innards like two halves of some life-giving melon. Our newborn's mouth had been stretched in a screaming O for five hours, and having completed what I already suspected was a feeble space-shuttle checklist of baby-maintenance tasks, under the accusing glass eyes of bears, I had handed the screaming O to her father. Squatting on the bed, employing a four-part technique described somewhat differently in five books, I was trying to milk myself into a tiny, slightly rocking metal bowl with a gentle but firm, circular-sweeping, consistent-pressure, *whoop, whoop, whoop* motion—which, believe me, if you've never tried to do it, is a lot harder than it sounds. The dad's motifs were sweatpants, pacing, cordless phone. His darkening new world, as a twenty-first-century urban parent, is one in which our friends are never home. Our relatives are never home. Unbelievably, the OB-GYN who delivered the baby, who brought this thing into our life, who wrongly signed off on the papers ... was not home. The entire La Leche League, world's biggest fans of the *whoop, whoop, whoop*? Famously touchy-feely, totally not home. By now our baby was red with screaming and looked as if she were going to swallow her tongue. My flailing co-pilot suddenly got an idea. Although I, the biological mother, had described the baby as refusing to nurse and therefore not hungry, he, the biological father, had noticed—calmly, scientifically, sharing this information as a friendly co-partner, because it was so completely neutral—that the screaming O was gnawing everything else in sight. He whipped out evidence of a betraying trip to Wal-Mart ... what my admittedly subjective memory recalls as cheapo artificial-strawberry baby formula in a plutonium-purple bottle topped with a pop-eyed Goofy head. Goofy. A laugh—yes, I thought, that's what infants require to draw nourishment. That's the problem with the breast. Not enough humor. From behind my metal bowl I explained tersely that although his help was appreciated, we—the baby and I—happened to be setting a rhythm. Establishing milk production. Building crucial immunities. I gestured authoritatively at my collapsing tower of manuals as evidence. Unfortunately, stuck into one as a bookmark was a telltale sprig of raffia twine. In a moment of horror I realized that he, now working the phone again, thought the stack of books was the very problem—proof that I had absolutely no idea what I was doing. What the raffia twine said was "a generation of women who cooked with the car keys." And now they were trying to nurse. "My mother just said something really interesting" was his only response. Having finally found someone who was home, he handed over the cordless. His mother? He must be kidding. Eighty-year-old Bernice lives in Sioux Falls, South Dakota ... farm

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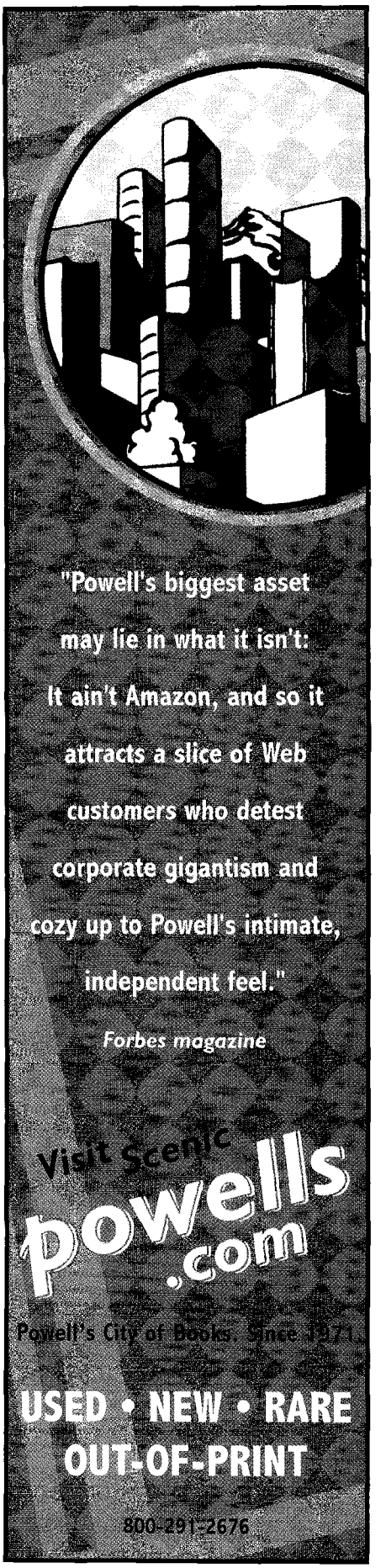
country, corn country, a place we had visited over the past twelve years with the detached attitude of witty anthropologists. And now, in a blink, Sioux Falls was Command Central, and Bernice was the chief of staff. Who thought it could be gas, it could be colic. Or, frankly, she said, "sometimes hungry babies won't eat because they sense fear ... in ... the milk." In other words, *"Don't panic—you could kill your baby!"*

It's a shame that many new parents may not have time to read Ann Hulbert's *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children,* or Peter N. Stearns's shorter but no less interesting *Anxious Parents: A History of Modern Childrearing in America.* They might see themselves less as lonely buffoons in some ill-fated sociological experiment than as archetypes in an American drama that's been going on for a long time. Indeed, all the stock dramatic elements are here—the urban mother trying to milk herself according to a book, the urban father's nostalgia for the farms of his boyhood, and, of course, Grandma with her ghoulishly arcane-sounding phrases. ("Fear in the milk"? What's next? A sugar tit soaked in bourbon?) To hear Hulbert and Stearns tell it, such culture clashes are as old as if not the hills, then at least industrialization and the troubled move to our increasingly nervous cities. To be fair, a diverse set of measures suggests that American parents are exceptionally anxious today. There's the explosion of parenting books, five times as many of which were published in 1997 as in 1975. By the 1990s the United States was using 90 percent of the world's Ritalin. And Stearns notes that whereas in the late 1930s a poll by Lewis Terman revealed that marriages with and without children were equally happy, since the 1950s child-free unions have become markedly happier than those with children, by increasing margins. And—here's the real rub—even among parents, the highest level of satisfaction is reported not within intact marriages but by divorced dads! Consistently, the less time spent with one's children, the more positive one's parenting experience. The more active the parents, the more they report feelings of inadequacy, negativity, and ambivalence.

Is television something parents should worry about? In 1980 studies showed that by the age of eighteen the average American child had spent more time watching television than in school or with parents. But thereafter, Stearns points out, the trend actually reversed: from 1981 to 1997 television watching markedly decreased, and the time children spent with their parents, much of it in sports-related activities, increased by 25 percent. In 2000, when a device was developed to catch drivers who ran red lights, the biggest offenders were parents—particularly mothers—rushing to make the next lesson or soccer game. While feeling inadequate, negative, and ambivalent. Meanwhile, divorced dads, out golfing, were feeling very, very good about their parenting. Which is to say that quantifying anxiety is complicated.

Relative amounts of parental confusion per decade, too, are hard to gauge. Sure, Americans today buy a lot of parenting books, but they have looked to such guides for years; in the twentieth century American families bought one copy of the government-sponsored *Infant Care* per first child before the 1940s and one copy of Dr. Spock thereafter. As for child stimulation, in a wonderful chapter titled simply "I'm Bored," Stearns traces boredom as a concept that wasn't associated with childhood until after World War II. (Initially the predominant concern was with not boring others.) Of course, before the 1930s, polls that measured every jot and tittle of parental misery on ever-splitting pie charts didn't even exist. What did exist, as early as the dawning of what some dubbed "The Century of the Child," was a parade of pediatric advisers so motley that they merit treatment in an epic novel (T. C. Boyle, are you listening?). Whereas *Anxious Parents* is structured around such themes as schooling, discipline, work, and chores, *Raising America* is a generation-by-generation history of advice, and the joy of this book is in how successfully Hulbert—who has written a biography of Jean Stafford—renders the taste and smell of the circus. Here are the same kinds of runaway pedi-



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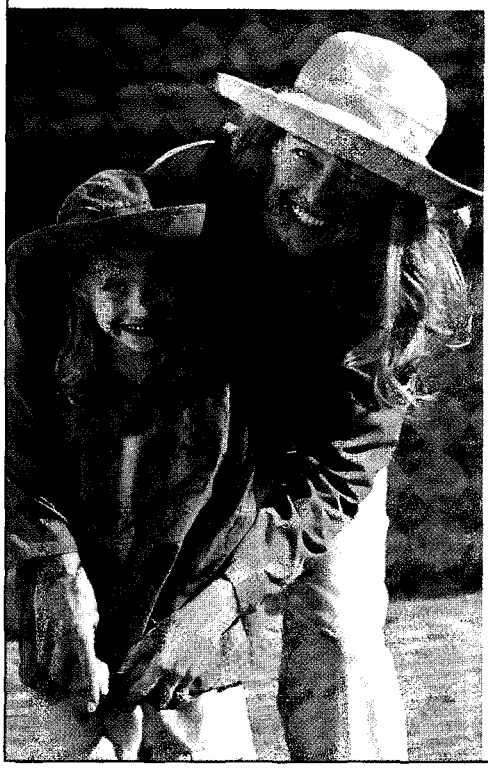

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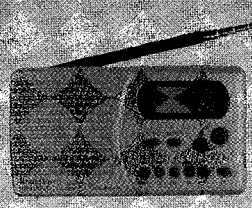

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atric best sellers we have today; "The Century of the Child" itself was taken from the title of a popular 1909 book. Here are the same folksy Dr. Feelgoods: as early as the 1890s William James was complaining that the high-profile pediatrician G. Stanley Hall's chatty questionnaires for mothers "ranked among the common pests of life." Babies had entered the lab by 1920, thanks to the efforts of the behaviorist John Broadus Watson. Hulbert's description of Watson's attempt to test fear in an amazingly imperturbable baby named Albert by clanging steel bars around his ears and having him "touch a Santa Claus mask" is one of the more hilarious passages in the book. Earnest conferences on modern parenting began as early as 1897; the concern then was over children (and mothers) who were becoming excessively "worried and nervous," as Hall put it, owing to the sensory bombardment of "factory and locomotive whistles, trolley cars and automobiles, music boxes and the numberless mechanical toys in the nursery, door-bells and telephones in the house."

What further interests Hulbert is actual styles of advice, reflecting the ever shifting relationship between the pediatric guru of the moment and his audience, mostly female. (Almost all the gurus, Hulbert notes with a fair share of juicy analysis, were men.) Watson, for instance, had an often comedically abusive writing style that was directly influenced by his college classmate H. L. Mencken. Hulbert describes Watson as "a star act in what one critic at the time characterized as 'a strange orgy of flagellation' that seemed to have become a form of national entertainment during the 1920s ... Watson catered to an 'appetite of Americans for hearing themselves abused.'" For today's analogue there's the tall Texan Dr. Phil—although when it comes to abuse, no one bests the battered but definitely still kicking Dr. Laura (for Hulbert's biography of her we can only wait). Equally interesting, Hulbert argues that pediatric advice itself is a constant, in that at any one time there are two poles: rigid authoritarianism versus liberal permissiveness; discipline versus

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negotiation; raising children according to strict schedules versus letting them develop like flowers, trees, or other essentially benign natural beings. At the turn of the century the loquacious Hall squared off against the tersely medical L. Emmett Holt (whose complex recipes for formula would confuse lab workers even today). In the 1930s the nasty "misbehaviorist" Watson's opposite number was the gentle-bedside-mannered Arnold Gesell, whose babies, instead of being harried with clanging steel bars, were allowed to recline in softly lit observation domes. Gesell's writing, too, painted childhood's travails in romantic pastels. For instance, his poetic term for toddler frustration was "thrustration," suggesting that children's scream fests could be excitingly developmental.

The implication in both Hulbert's and Stearns's books, then, is that parental anxiety, too, may be a constant. T. S. Eliot's term for postwar Americans was the "Worried Generation"—they were "anxious," Hulbert writes, "in an age of rising affluence and possible nuclear apocalypse." It's hard to see what has really changed in fifty years. A peculiarly American problem, chronic parental anxiety may just be the consequence of a meritocratic, class-free society. We demand the best for our children, whatever that is ... and therein lies the Zen koan. If we give them the Barbies/GameCubes/television/PlayStations they want and we can afford, will they become too slack, glazed, and lazy to get into Harvard? If we don't make our children work for their allowances, will they grow up lacking traction in the

When you tour preschools catering to every developmental whim, it seems almost, well, Third World to let your three-year-old go play with the pockmarked Play-Doh in the nursery school at the corner church.

Ironically, Hulbert points out, in practice it's the soft-liner's program, rather than the hard-liner's, that becomes impossibly demanding. By-the-clock authoritarians get short but predictable times off. Loving gardeners who spend twenty-four hours a day straining to pick up ineffable cues from their developmentally delicate hothouse flowers wind up exhausted and hysterical. One frazzled 1950s mother wrote to Benjamin Spock, the most famously "permissive" expert of all, "Don't you realize that when you always emphasize that a child basically wants to behave well, and will behave well if he is handled wisely, you make the parent feel responsible for everything that goes wrong?" This motherly angst was probably much to Spock's thrustration, because his intention all along had been to reassure parents. His central dictum, "Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do," was an effort to address what he saw by mid-century as the greatest problem of modern parenting: hesitancy owing to overdependence on ... ever growing choruses of pediatric advice.

capitalist system, becoming as useful to society—and, perhaps more troubling, as relevant—as the Waldorf-Astoria-dwelling, Euro-disco-macarena-ing Hilton sisters? The idea that in America a child can grow up to be absolutely anything actually puts enormous pressure on parents—particularly parents well enough off to believe that they should be able to give their children every advantage. When you tour preschools catering to every developmental whim, it seems almost, well, Third World to let your three-year-old go play with the pockmarked Play-Doh in the nursery school at the corner church. Even today we are all some version of what Margaret Mead termed the "third-generation American ... always moving on, always, in his hopes, moving up, leaving behind him all that was his past." Instead of bequeathing to their children known status and place, parents confront, as Hulbert writes (quoting Mead), "an elusive quest to keep up with fellow Americans on 'an unknown chart called "happiness."'" This is why each generation turns to

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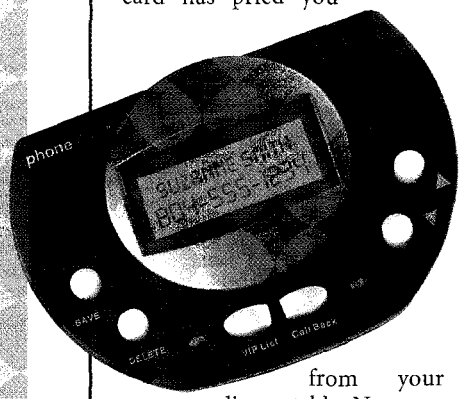

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professional advice—because the advice must be ever new.

One thing, though, has definitely changed: the role of American grandmothers. They've had quite a ride. From Holt's turn-of-the-century warnings to mothers, in the interests of baby science, to turn a "deaf ear" to "the grandmother ... [whose] influence is particularly pernicious," to the current right-winger John Rosemond's exhortation to return to the "voice of grandma, of common sense," our grandmas went from being abused to being worshipped. Now they're almost entirely absent—liberated, one might say. The foreword to *What to Expect the First Year* (published in 1989 and still a best seller; my copy is from the fifty-seventh printing) reads, "With the old extended family virtually dismantled, grandmothers are jogging, sculpting, golfing, traveling, and starting new careers." You can almost see a stencil of pink daiquiris in the margin. It continues, quoting a conversation with a Chinese pediatrician, "Chinese parents don't need pediatricians for advice on feeding and toilet training. They've got live-in grandmothers." (Based on my personal observation, however, 90 percent of Chinese grandparents still living with their families would move out tomorrow if they could. So the togetherness is less inspiring than it may seem.)

Not that grandmas aren't helpful in a pinch. When I was able to get my jaw off the floor, I did attempt to make use of my mother-in-law's barnyard-sounding advice. I put babe to breast and, instead of looking down anxiously, straightened up, relaxed my shoulders, and lifted my neck, yoga-like, thinking, "I don't care if you nurse or not. Nor am I fearful!" And indeed, the baby began to nurse. Maybe it was better positioning. Or maybe the fear went out of the milk. As for the books on the night table, in the end we may use them just the way we use Grandma—less as a companion in need than as a companion in worry.

Sandra Tsing Loh is a writer and performer whose solo show I Worry *was given its premiere at the Kennedy Center in April. Her most recent book is* A Year in Van Nuys *(2001).*

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TIME TRAVEL

Like many other sagas of emigrants and emigration, including Cristina García's own *Dreaming in Cuban*, the one contained in *Monkey Hunting* cannot be told in a single generation. The novel opens with a family tree, and the names and dates marching down the page provide the reader's first glimpse of the scope and complex ambitions of the story that lies ahead. How does Chen Pan, born in China in 1837, end up with the black slave Lucrecia? And how does his descendant Domingo Chen, born in 1950, end up having a child with the Vietnamese woman Tham Thanh Lan? The answers to these questions and to the central questions of emigrant life—Where do we choose to call home, and will that place make us welcome?—form much of the subject matter of this exhilarating new work.

MONKEY HUNTING
by Cristina García
Knopf

At the center of the novel is the resourceful, lucky, tenderhearted Chen Pan. As a young man he flees his desolate village in China, where the crops are rotting and bandits are roaming, and allows himself to be tempted by a vision of wealth and warmth in a distant place called Cuba. But after surviving a dreadful voyage he finds himself working as a slave on a sugar plantation. Once again he survives, and escapes to make his way to Havana, where he opens a secondhand shop, the Lucky Find.

One of the dangers of a narrative that jumps without warning from Cuba in 1860 to New York in 1968 to Shanghai in 1924 is that the reader can easily be left behind. But such is the force of García's sensual, warm, witty prose that even when I didn't entirely understand her choices, I was happy to follow wherever she led. How could I, a Scot, resist a narrator who claims that British tourists to Cuba will pay a premium for any souvenir "sporting a pig"? Or describes a woman's eyes near the moment of death as "unusually large, the whites clean as starched napkins"? I soon found myself deeply attached to both major and minor characters. And as I turned the pages, I began to understand that García combines her gorgeous writing with a relentless view of history and a fierce understanding of the degree to which the individual life is at the mercy of larger forces. This is a lesson that many of us in the West have until recently been privileged to ignore, but we may soon be relearning it. —*MARGOT LIVESEY*

DANGEROUS CRAVINGS

Robert Stone's sly new novel is an exciting bad dream of a book in which the hero's midlife crisis accelerates into a Third World thrill ride. Michael Ahearn, a midwestern professor of literature, has always considered himself lucky, someone who has "done quite well by randomness"—a force he regards as being "no less cruel than some unlikely mysterious providence." But when his twelve-year-old son survives, unharmed, a coma brought on by hypothermia, Michael realizes that this stunning reprieve has "come of nothing, of absolutely nothing, out of a kaleidoscope, out of a Cracker Jack box." *This* sort of "random singularity" excites in him only "a proper revulsion for life's rank overabundance." The boy's continuing existence proves somehow more devastating than his death would have been, a sick psychological joke that Stone portrays with beautiful, concise credibility.

BAY OF SOULS
by Robert Stone
Houghton Mifflin

After this calamitous miracle Michael begins "trying to outrun the shadow inside him," to dodge "some kind of bill [that] had come up for payment." His heretofore routinely strained marriage begins to shred. Instead of an affair with his unprepossessing teaching assistant (which his wife has always suspected, and which in fact he hasn't had), he plunges into a romance with the most glamorous woman on campus. Lara Purcell is a political-science professor of exotic origins, the divorced wife of a leftist "agent of influence," and perhaps a onetime lover of Fidel Castro's. Now, having done an ideological about-face, she teaches in a provincial department known for its hospitality to burned-out right-wing spooks. There she inveighs against "gallant little social egalitarian feminist fairies," thrilling her PC-whipped colleagues.

Her liaison with Michael has an actual S&M side involving a collar and a gun. Their sessions make him wonder, "Was Krafft-Ebing one person or two? Lara would know." Either way, the "shame and self-despising rage" he starts to feel are just a warm-up for the soul-shaking dangers he begins to crave. A real chance at self-renewal comes when Lara proposes that he join her on a trip to "St. Trinity," the Caribbean island of her paradisal childhood. She needs to go home to sell the hotel her family has owned for ages, and to participate in memorial rites ("Masonic, sort of," with a bit of voodoo and the rosary thrown in) for her brother, John-Paul, recently dead of AIDS.

For Michael, going to St. Trinity amounts to winning the emotional lottery. Its "crazed, promiscuous forces"—the sort of cultural-political gumbo that has amused Stone from the New Orleans of *A Hall of Mirrors* (1967) to the Jerusalem of *Damascus Gate* (1998)—are just the tonic for the hero's wan climacteric. As soon as he arrives, Michael experiences feverish dreams and the "thrill of panic," all of it accompanied by drums calling him to a "whole world of otherness." The island's political turmoil matches his inner agitation: the United States is helping to defend the results of a recent election, but the Americans' new man, a Rolex-wearing, Fort Benning–trained veteran of Grenada named Eustace Junot, is not exactly a tribune of the people. "Besides that," explains John-Paul's partner, Roger, "it's total disorder. Looting and daylight robbery."

There are drugs, too. Roger and John-Paul had lately been working with some Colombians who are none too pleased that a plane bearing their emeralds and artworks has just gone down off the coast. "You have to dive a wreck," Lara tells Michael, who is more

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used to the waters of Lake Superior than to these environs. "You have to get three cases out of the aft compartment of a Cessna 185." Needless to say, she can count the peril-hungry Michael in.

This ought to be entirely ridiculous, Iron John meets Mistah Kurtz, but Stone, as skillful as ever, makes large chunks of it fresh and credible. The book does often seem synthetic, with Richard Russo–like glimpses of academe; a Dickeyesque hunting trip; knowing bits of Graham Greene and Joan Didion, as the island's governments rotate with the ceiling fans; and even the sort of thank-you-Jesus orgasms we haven't heard since Norman Mailer ("When he made her come he could hear the language of everything created beyond his understanding"). But none of this finally matters much; whatever its droops and derivations, the novel winds up being irreducibly Stone's, a quick, terrific read that transcends each type and template. The more his books edge toward apocalypse, the funnier and smarter their author tends to become. Instead of Greene's baleful infallibility, one gets hijinks and hysterics. A peculiar, realistic ballast is somehow supplied by the believably off-the-wall—for example, the backstory detail that "Roger's father had been a historical novelist, an African American from Boston whose books romanticized the antebellum South and were perennial bestsellers."

Only Lara ends up being a hard sell to the reader. The reactionary succubus of the campus goes all girly once she's back on native ground, trying not only to extricate herself from the intelligence rackets but also to reclaim her soul, which she has decided John-Paul gave away to an old spirit woman named La Marinette. It's difficult to believe that this tough cookie of fortune expects to get it back during John-Paul's *retirer* ceremony, or that her pistol-strapping, collar-wearing romance with Michael will turn New Age and dewy ("They would begin again. Because his situation was so like hers, the two of them together were no accident"). By the time the American consul pronounces Lara "the most fascinating person on the island," the once infatuated reader has already voted her off it.

Bay of Souls is minor Stone in scope and length, and after its time on St. Trinity the novel (like Michael) never quite regains its footing. But it is full of splendid writing, and the third-person narration is marked by frisky, subtle elisions. Michael's dive to the submerged plane, followed by a too-fast ascent, is a particular success.

> The surface faintly lit with lovely moonlight was up there, a dream, a distant notion. But now he was in the real world, the water one, and he was drowning like all the others. One with the million million water bozos, blue bathing beauties, Phoenician sailors and narcotrafficing *pilotos*, all the other airless losers beneath the undulating sparkle of the briny deep.

Any novelist who has been workshopped into believing that showing always beats telling should take a look at sentences in which Stone's abstractions have twice the density and vividness of someone else's picture-painterly brushstrokes: "In the shower he was inflamed, frightened and guilty"; "The streets were poor, of a poverty underlaid with some destroyed elegance."

Early on Michael tells us how bored he is with the cheap "literary vitalism" he is supposed to celebrate in all the novels he teaches. He lives in a world where toasts to Dionysus are made by tenured professors sitting in the campus Starbucks, and he has had it with the easy existential heroes and "self-conscious libertines" of the printed page. As a novelist, Stone is of course even more securely trapped than Michael: he can protest literary vitalism only literarily, and his novel's biggest point—"Without physical courage ... there is no moral courage"—may seem derivative too, of Hemingway. But you've got to admire any novel—and this is one—that actually yearns to put its money where its mouth is. —*THOMAS MALLON*

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STERLING HUNDLEY

BOOKS

NOT GREEN, NOT RED, NOT PINK

Oscar Wilde cannot be simplified into an Irish rebel, a subversive socialist, or a gay martyr

BY GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT

.....

In a famously grim saying, the prospect of being hanged in a fortnight's time concentrates the mind wonderfully. So does imprisonment for two years "kept to hard labour." Alone in his prison cell in 1895, Oscar Wilde was bewildered by the terrifyingly sudden ruin that had pulled him down from the heights. It had taken years to find his true métier, which was theater rather than poetry or fiction, and comedy rather than tragedy. *An Ideal Husband* had opened that January at the Haymarket Theatre, before a glittering first-night audience that included the Prince of Wales. Wilde had dined afterward with his friends Max Beerbohm and Herbert Beerbohm Tree, and Lord Alfred Douglas, the captivating young "Bosie," with whom his life had been entwined for more than two years past and with whom he had shortly departed for Algiers and the pursuit of pleasure. Wilde was back in London for his last first night.

On February 14 *The Importance of Being Earnest* opened at St. James's Theatre. It was a change in manner and tone from Wilde's previous work and also quite different in terms of literary quality from anything he had written before. He had been famous for years; now it seemed that at the age of forty, he was at last securely established for life. Everyone knows the tragedy of hubris and nemesis that followed. Insulted by Douglas's crazy father, Lord Queensberry, who addressed him with angry illiteracy as "Oscar Wilde posing Somdomite," Wilde brought a prosecution for criminal libel, a refinement of English law by which a convicted defendant could be imprisoned. But Queensberry's counsel produced devastating evidence to incriminate Wilde, who was imprisoned less than fifteen weeks after that glorious Saint Valentine's Day. Treadmill, foul diet, and insomnia broke Wilde in body and spirit. He died within four years of his release, aged forty-six.

Everyone also knows Wilde's saying that he had put his talent into his books and his genius into his life, and it's true that few other writers have ever devoted so much energy to inventing and promoting themselves as personalities. "Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde," as he was known at Oxford, shortened by stages to the universally recognizable "Oscar," wasn't so much a writer of books and plays as an artifice, which was now shattered. And in silent solitude he brooded incessantly on his fate. What he could not have foreseen was the way in which he would become an object of literary grave-robbing, with interested parties trying to appropriate his shroud—and forever projecting their own interests and obsessions on him. For the hundred years since his death "Oscar Wilde" has meant less an oeuvre than a study in reputation; and even now disentangling the man from tendentious interpretation is a tricky job.

The most definitive and scholarly biography of Wilde is Richard Ellmann's informative if somewhat imperceptive life of 1987, which drew heavily on

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Wilde's letters. Batches of these had been published over the years before 1962, when the first proper collection appeared. Edited by Rupert Hart-Davis, it was a superb book, and a landmark in one other way. Wilde's younger son, Vyvyan Holland (Wilde's unhappy wife, Constance, had hurriedly changed the family name when he was imprisoned), was then still alive, and his grandson was at school at the time. After some agonizing by the family, it was decided that there should be no censorship on grounds of taste or morals, although the law under which Wilde had been convicted was still in force, and the frankness with which some of the letters treated homosexuality was at the time still very unusual in print. Hart-Davis had tracked down every letter he could, but the latest edition, edited by Merlin Holland (the grandson in question), includes several hundred more, making it, with its full and illuminating annotation, in its way the best of all biographies of Wilde.

One of Ireland's countless gifts to English letters, Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin in 1854 (two years before Bernard Shaw, eleven before W. B. Yeats, and twenty-eight before James Joyce; has any other city ever produced such a crop within the space of three decades?). From Trinity College, Dublin, he proceeded to Oxford and a brilliant English debut. After graduating he was at loose ends, going to "the Hicks-Beachs' in Hampshire, to kill time and pheasants and the *ennui* of not having set the world quite on fire as yet," but he hadn't long to wait. The early letters give a portrait of the artist as a young man on the make, as he buttonholed the fashionable and tried to fashion himself. All the while he was tuning his first public performance, as an "aesthete." When *Patience*, Gilbert and Sullivan's still enjoyable musical satire on aestheticism, opened in New York in September of 1881, its producer asked Wilde to give a lecture tour in America, by way of promoting both the show and himself; as if to illustrate his own principle that all publicity is good publicity, Wilde accepted.

At that time traveling the American lecture circuit was a combination of author tour, op-ed column, and talk show, and Wilde was in his element from the moment he arrived, in January of 1882: "For lecturing in Chicago I received before I stepped on the platform a fee of 1000 dollars ... I have a sort of triumphal progress, live like a young sybarite, travel like a young god." He met everyone from Oliver Wendell Holmes to Jefferson Davis, and captivated Colorado miners along with Beacon Hill high society. All this required not only brazenness but lack of a sense of the ridiculous. He dressed up in a ludicrous costume of his own devising whenever possible; one letter to his American lecture agent includes the wondrous sentence "They were dreadfully disappointed at Cincinnati at my not wearing knee-breeches."

On his return he was still looking for a career, and a métier. He had written *The Duchess of Padua* for the American actress Mary Anderson, and told her, "I have no hesitation in saying that it is the masterpiece of my literary work, the *chef d'oeuvre* of my youth." Few readers today would have any hesitation in saying that it is complete tripe. But then, how much of Wilde's earlier writing—which is to say that done before his late thirties—is any good? The empty verse drama of *The Duchess of Padua* ("Love is the sacrament of life; it sets / Virtue where virtue was not; cleanses men / Of all the vile pollutions of this world ...") was matched by the leaden prose drama of *Vera*, ostensibly a political play ("Brothers, is it your will that Prince Paul Maraloffski be admitted and take the oath of the Nihilist?").

The need for an income was all the greater after Wilde's marriage to Constance Lloyd, in 1884. Their son Cyril was born in June of 1885, and Vyvyan in November of 1886. Wilde was an affectionate husband to begin with, and a loving father always; after his disaster it was the knowledge that he would never see his sons again, as much as anything, that broke his heart. "I was always a good father to both my children," he wrote from prison. "I love them dearly and was dearly loved by them, and Cyril was my friend." His relationship with Constance is more

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problematic. When the first edition of the *Letters* appeared, forty years ago, it was reviewed by W. H. Auden, whose essay is a riveting document in its own right. Distinctly unsympathetic to Wilde, both as a writer and as a man, Auden called his marriage "certainly the most immoral and perhaps the only really heartless act of Wilde's life," and could not accept the excuse of lack of sexual self-knowledge: "one cannot believe that Wilde was such an innocent."

Is it as easy as that? A "mulierast" ("woman-lover," or straight, in contrast to "pederast," in the underground slang of Wilde's set) feels that he may be intruding on a private debate here. Still, everyday observation suggests that whereas there are men like Auden, who emphatically knew and enjoyed what he was by adolescence, there are others again who enter middle age as yet uncertain as to their sexual identity. Wilde was twenty-nine when he married Constance, and no evidence has been found that he was actively homosexual before his marriage. At twenty-three he nearly married Florence Balcombe before she instead chose a young Irish civil servant named Bram Stoker, who was to achieve a different kind of literary immortality with *Dracula*. It seems perfectly possible that Wilde got married before making that crucial discovery.

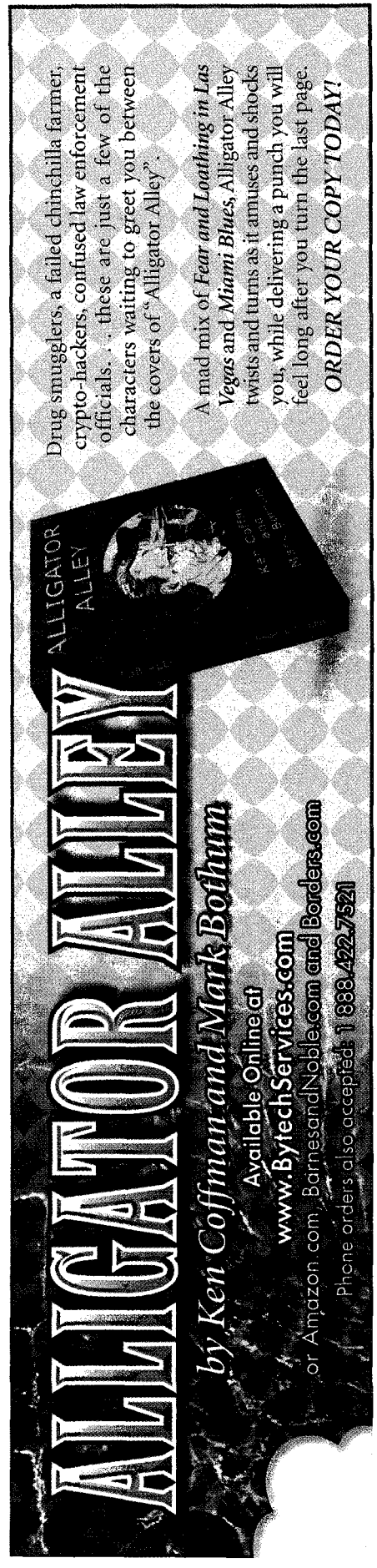
After trying to find employment as a school inspector, of all things, Wilde took up the one salaried job he ever had, in the unlikely form of editing a women's magazine from 1887 to 1889. In 1891 he published his only novel, and the mood changed. "I think it will make a sensation," he predicted of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and he wasn't wrong. He despaired of "the possibility of any general culture in England" when books were judged morally, but maybe he would be better off if *The Picture of Dorian Gray* were judged on moral rather than literary grounds. It isn't quite right to call it "a bore," as Auden did. Wilde was often silly but rarely dull, and he had the gift—not granted to some finer and deeper minds—of holding the reader. But the nonsense of it! Not just Dorian's naughty exoticism, but the clunking melodrama.

And the dialogue! Although Wilde said that "Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks me: Dorian what I would like to be," there are plenty of hints that Lord Henry Wotton is a self-portrait, not least in his relentless epigram-mongering: "I can sympathise with everything, except suffering ... the only things one never regrets are one's mistakes." That last is followed by "A laugh ran round the table." I'll bet it did. Anyone who has ever dallied at all in the beau monde will have made the interesting discovery of how little it takes to acquire a reputation as a wit. If the way that dinner tables fall about at Lord Henry's empty quips had been intended as satire, one could give Wilde high marks. As it is, that banter does not encourage one to think that his own table talk was quite as scintillating as was claimed.

He soon returned to drama—and began the great drama of his own life, when he met Lord Alfred Douglas, in the summer of 1891. This awesome tragedy, albeit with comic interludes, was to be played out in three acts. First, their mutual obsession grew, and for more than two years they lived an increasingly giddy *folie à deux* before the curtain fell with a ghastly sweep in May of 1895, when sentence was pronounced at the Old Bailey. For two years the scene shifted to Wilde's hateful prison cell. Then came the final act, and really the most tragic, from his release, in May of 1897, to his death, in November of 1900, in squalidly anticlimactic circumstances.

Attempts to appropriate or reinvent Wilde come in various shades of green, red, and pink: Wilde the Irish rebel, Wilde the subversive socialist, Wilde the gay martyr. All these have been most assiduously promoted by intelligent writers; none looks any more convincing after a close reading of the *Letters* and his works.

Begin with the wearing of the green, and what Roy Foster, one of the saner contemporary Irish historians, has called the way "Wilde has been re-Hibernicized as a 'Fenian' and even 'the first gay nationalist martyr.'" The Wilde family may have been Dutch in origin—one of many such, along with English and Scottish, that had come to Ireland



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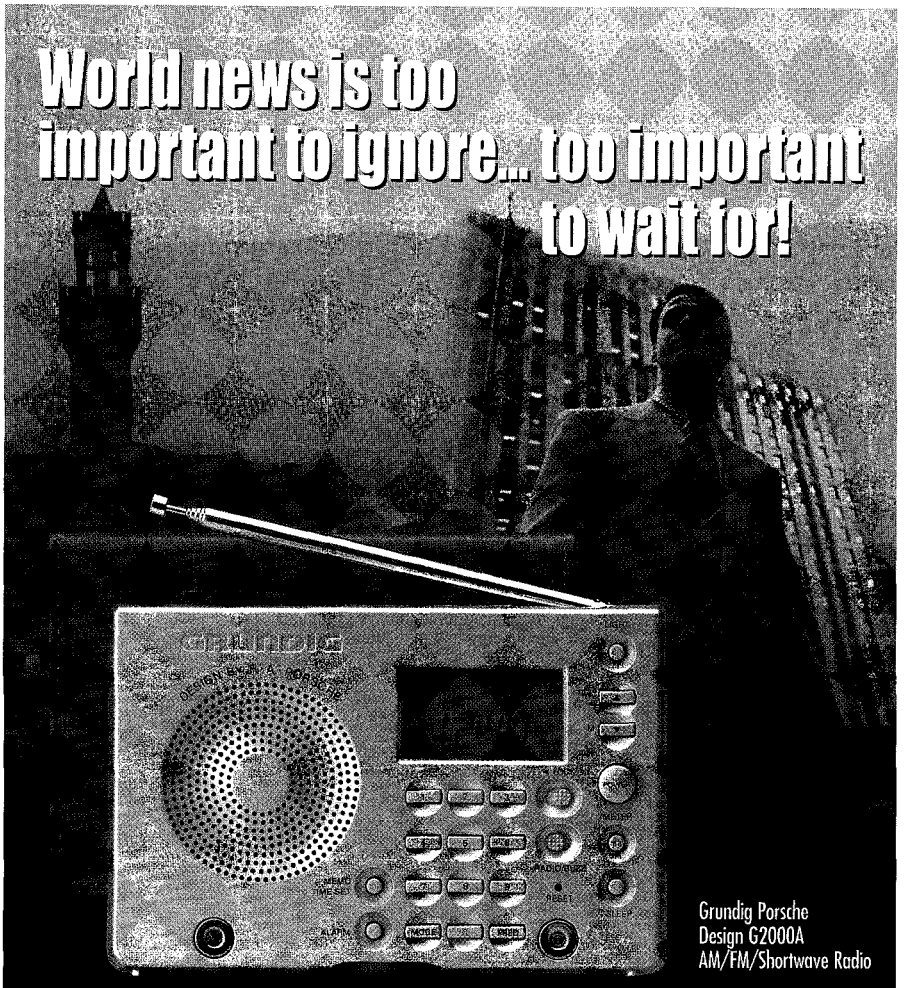

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at the end of the seventeenth century, following the total extirpation of the Catholic Gaelic order and the creation of the Ascendancy, which owned and ruled Ireland for 200 years. Wilde was of course brought up as a Protestant; several of his uncles and cousins were Episcopalian clergymen. His father, Sir William, was a surgeon in Dublin; his mother was the preposterous nationalist poetess "Speranza," appropriately played by Vanessa Redgrave in the latest Wilde biopic.

Like his mother, Wilde made play of being Irish, as when he told Shaw ingratiatingly, "We are both Celtic" (which they weren't; Shaw was another Saxon Protestant). But when he published a sonnet in the *Irish Monthly*, edited by a nationalist priest, the Reverend Matthew Russell S.J., Wilde wrote in reply to a rebuke from Russell, "I am sorry you object to the words '*our* English land.' It is a noble privilege to count oneself of the same race as Keats or Shakespeare." For the last twenty years of his life Wilde barely visited Ireland. Even when he had returned there as a young man, his main Irish concern had been fishing and shooting at his father's lodge in Connemara, along with collecting rents on the family property—or rather, in the age of the Land League and Captain Boycott, the difficulty of collecting them, though this at least afforded an excuse when tradesmen tried to dun him: "The extremely unsettled state of Ireland, and the impossibility of getting rents even after the twenty-five per cent reduction, render it really out of my power to settle your bill." That kind of Irish rebel.

As a young man, Wilde flirted with Roman Catholicism, losing a legacy in consequence, and he was baptized a Catholic on his deathbed. The nationalist critic Declan Kiberd has made much of this, with the fatuous claim that "Wilde had always been something of a cultural Catholic"; Kiberd explains that "Catholicism had multiple attractions for a Tory Anarchist, appealing at once to his love of gorgeous traditions and to his belief in rebellion." It is true that Ireland is a predominantly Catholic nation, and was for long a subject nation. From that comes the false syllogism

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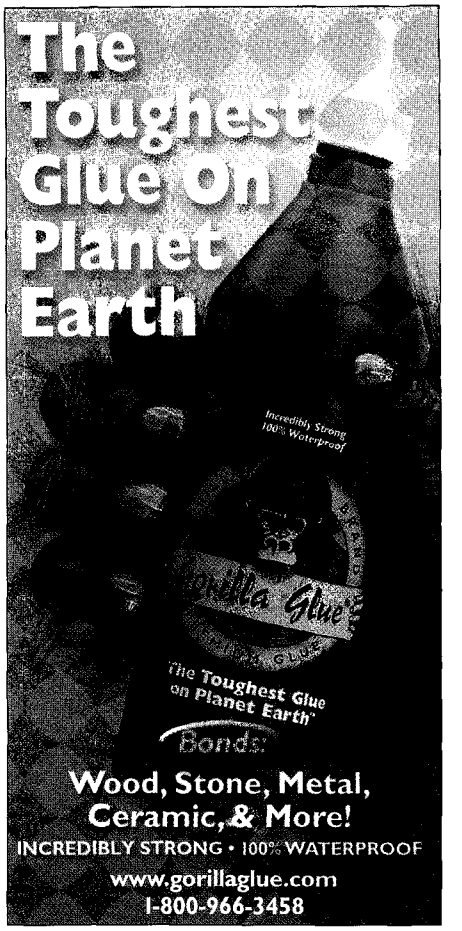
that Irish Catholicism must have been a "rebellious" force rather than a reactionary one. As it was, the independent Irish state, with its narrow philistinism and extreme Catholic puritanism, would prove an ironic reflection on Wilde's nationalist sympathies: the stupid and cruel law under which he was imprisoned was repealed from the English statute book in 1967, but remained in force in the Irish Republic for another quarter century.

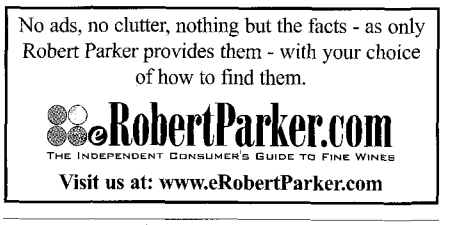
This desperate desire to mold Wilde to one's own preconceptions can produce still droller results. Owen Dudley Edwards is a considerable authority on the popular literature of the period, and usefully traces Wilde's influence on later writers, from Saki to Evelyn Waugh to Joe Orton, before telling us that "Wilde has, idiotically, been called a snob." There might be statements made about him more idiotic than that, but it isn't easy to imagine them. In his letters and in his work Wilde's snobbery is as transparent as it is harmless. It's true that he combined this with an intermittent affectation of radicalism, but if Dudley Edwards thinks that it's impossible to be both a self-proclaimed leftist liberal and a crashing snob, he should get out more often. Snobbery may even have been beneficial to Wilde as a writer. Isaiah Berlin wrote once about the kind of young man who "could not but be dazzled by the aristocracy, as Balzac, or Wilde, or Proust were, ... when he came into contact with what seemed, and perhaps was, a freer, gayer, more confident world." That world nourished Wilde, who loved its acclaim. In his final exile, almost more humiliating than begging for money or being cut by those he had once known was that someone he despised could treat him "as I would not have treated the most dull and unimportant of the lower middle-classes."

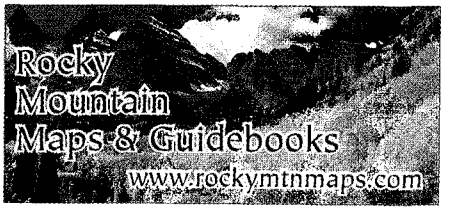
Other admirers claim Wilde as a subversive or even a revolutionist. Christopher Hitchens has called him an *homme sérieux*, citing as his text "The Soul of Man Under Socialism," an essay Wilde wrote in 1891. Not everyone at the time took Wilde's politics as seriously as Hitchens does now. None less than Friedrich Engels was still around in 1892 to snort with derision at a form of socialism that "has actually donned evening dress and lounges lazily on drawing-room *causeuses*." "The Soul of Man" can seem beguiling, partly because Wilde was really preaching not state socialism but a form of libertarianism in a world free from want, where the machine would emancipate man and not enslave him, and his genial levity is sometimes a refreshing contrast to the dourness of his Marxian and Fabian contemporaries. There has always been something depressing about the inheritance bequeathed by religious puritanism to the secular puritans of the left, those "who don't have the faith but won't have the fun," and we all know radicals who could usefully lighten up a bit.

All the same, Wilde's languid cleverness carried him astray. "As for the virtuous poor," he wrote, "one can pity them, of course, but one cannot possibly admire them." But it was precisely men from among the virtuous poor—otherwise the "self-helping" working class—who were at that very time building the labor movement in England and giving their lives to socialism in a way that Wilde would never have done. His levity undid him in other ways. In the very month that "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" appeared, Wilde published a letter in the *Daily Telegraph*, then as now the London voice of commercial conservatism, on the subject of men's dress: "The handsome effect produced by servants' liveries is almost entirely due to the buttons they wear ... Waistcoats will show whether a man can admire poetry or not." That kind of *homme sérieux*. My sympathies are with Engels.

To disallow Wilde the palm of gay martyrdom might seem farfetched, and homosexual men can scarcely be denied the right to see him as a brother. But the letters make it clear that Wilde never claimed that martyr's palm, or even, despite his horror at what had engulfed him, claimed to be the victim of any kind of frame-up (a word Hitchens ill-advisedly uses). Writing to Douglas from his cell in words of icy clarity, he recognized that "I am here for having tried to put your father in prison." And he said,







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> The one disgraceful, unpardonable, and to all time contemptible action of my life was my allowing myself to be forced into appealing to Society for help and protection ... Of course once I had put into motion the forces of Society, Society turned on me and said, "Have you been living all this time in defiance of my laws, and do you now appeal to those laws for protection? You shall have those laws exercised to the full."

So far from being "glad to be gay," he brought his fatal action against Queensberry to *deny* that he was a "Somdomite." And although his speech from the dock about "the love that dare not speak its name" brought cheers and tears from those who heard it, Wilde was not openly defending physical love between men but specifically (if implausibly) insisting that this "great affection of an elder for a younger man" was entirely spiritual, "as pure as it is perfect." That kind of gay martyr.

Meeting Alfred Douglas was the decisive moment of Wilde's life, and his great undoing. As his infatuation grew, he realized that he not only had fallen in love but had become caught up in a frightful family quarrel. It was at Douglas's urging that he rose to the bait cast by Queensberry, and in prison Wilde turned with controlled rage on Bosie. In his recent biography of Lord Alfred, Douglas Murray did his best to make a case for Bosie, but his advocacy is no more persuasive than anyone else's for that "vicious, gold-digging, snobbish, anti-Semitic, untalented little horror for whom no good word can be said," in Auden's uncompromising words. Murray even quaintly claims that Douglas had real poetic talent, and gives as one example the "movingly" written "Ennui": "Who shall devise this thing, / To give high utterance to Miscontent, / Or make Indifference articulate?" One might think these lines certainly very useful, to show any writing class as a prime example of how not to compose English verse. Even Douglas's one celebrated line, "I am the Love that dare not speak its name," is famous only because of the part it played in Wilde's trial.

A better defense of Douglas might be that he was Wilde's muse. Until they met, Wilde had nothing like a masterpiece to his name. In fact, it's hard to see how much of his work could ever have been taken seriously, in his lifetime or later. Some of his slighter pieces survive, not least his children's stories, which can be curiously touching. I have, as a talisman from childhood, a "talking book" of "The Happy Prince" on 78s. It made me weep at six, and still can fifty years later. Wilde showed more promise when he went back to theater in 1892, although some of the lines of the first three plays in that decade hang heavy in the air, and none of those plays matches *The Importance of Being Earnest*, "that absurd comedy ... so trivial, so irresponsible," as Wilde called it, and Auden just as felicitously acclaimed it as "perhaps the only purely verbal opera in English."

It is also an authentic masterpiece of gay sensibility, starting with the interplay of character. With homosexual writers, the reader sometimes needs to effect what could be called gender transposition: Proust's Albertine doesn't really make sense until one thinks of her as him, and I am not sure that any of the female characters in *Earnest* can be taken seriously as a woman. There are also the themes of false identity, secret dealings, and "guising," all bound up with Wilde's own double life in those years. None of that would be enough if Wilde hadn't at last discovered the pure spirit of comedy. Awful as his sufferings were, it is grievous not least to think that but for his downfall, he might have written many more comedies on that sublime level.

But he didn't. He scarcely wrote anything apart from letters, and what makes this last act so indelibly sad is that Wilde left prison with such high hopes, of writing again and meeting people again, only for the hopes to crumble. A large part of his misery after his release came not from indigence but from the gradual realization that he really was a total outcast, who could never again consort with anyone respectable, let alone grand. There is nothing more horribly ironic in the *Letters* than his writing to Douglas shortly before he was to be sentenced, "I decided that it was nobler and more beautiful to stay ... I did not want to be called a coward or a deserter. A false name, a disguise, a hunted life, all that is not for me." Perhaps he remembered writing that letter when, exiled forever and disguised as "Sebastian Melmoth," he was hunted out of hotels where censorious English tourists were staying.

One after another, the players left the stage. Having endured her son's disgrace, Lady Wilde died in February of 1896. Constance bravely came to break the news to Wilde in prison, and wrote to him regularly afterward; they never met again. In March of 1898 he reported from Paris, "I had a very nice letter from Constance yesterday." Less than two weeks later she died in Genoa after a spinal operation, aged forty. With his parents and his wife dead, with any sight of his sons denied him, with few friends still meeting him, Wilde decayed emotionally and physically, until he approached his premature end. "In Paris!" Dr. Chasuble says when he hears of the supposed death of Ernest: "I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last." Whatever his state of mind, Wilde had little choice about dying in Paris, where his ghastly last illness consumed him.

As if all he had done to Oscar and to English poetry weren't bad enough, Lord Alfred Douglas turned madder, badder, and more dangerous to know with every year thereafter, becoming almost insanely quarrelsome and litigious. He screeched and hectored away, and died in 1945, unmourned except by a few odd friends he had latterly collected. His bitter enemy Robert Ross, Oscar's most faithful friend, admirably cleared Wilde's debts and then brought out a fourteen-volume *Collected Works of Oscar Wilde* in 1908. But the best and happiest thing Ross ever did was to befriend Wilde's two boys and reconcile them with their father's memory, which still scarred them. In the year of the *Collected Works* he took the brothers to a grand dinner in their father's honor attended by many of his friends and some social notables—a sign that Wilde's posthumous rehabilitation was under way.

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In *The Importance of Being Earnest* one of the most exquisitely contrapuntal lines is "The General was essentially a man of peace, except in his domestic life. But I have no doubt his name would appear in any military directory." So did Cyril Holland's name, after he became, of all things, an efficient and popular officer in the Royal Artillery, but "man of peace" wasn't allowed him. When the Great War broke out, he and his brother went to the Western Front, and there Cyril, along with three quarters of a million of his countrymen, met his destiny, caught by a sniper's bullet at Neuve-Chapelle in 1915. Vyvyan survived the war and lived until 1967. In 1954 he published *Son of Oscar Wilde*, a rather bleak memoir in which he said, "For many years I had a recurrent dream that I met my father again, rather quietly in a somberly-lit room, and that he gently spoke to me and asked me to forgive him for the unhappiness he had brought upon his family."

At least Vyvyan had lived to see Wilde's memory transformed. The plays were gradually, and then frequently, performed again. *The Importance of Being Earnest* was revived in London in 1912, and in 1946 a charity performance attended by King George VI and the royal family gave a final accolade of respectability. Now Wilde is constantly in print; he has been given a window in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, and a kitschy memorial was unveiled not long ago in a London street, all of which would have gratified him. He died broken and miserable, but not without courage, not without humor, not without even some dignity. He should have the last words.

After his release he told a friend that when they next met, "you will see the ruin and wreck of what once was wonderful and brilliant, and terribly improbable." A year later his wanderings took him almost unintended to Genoa. Visiting Constance's grave, he was "deeply affected"; and he was filled "with a sense, also, of the uselessness of all regrets. Nothing could have been otherwise, and Life is a very terrible thing." A

Geoffrey Wheatcroft is a regular contributor to The Atlantic. *He has just finished writing a history of the Tour de France.*

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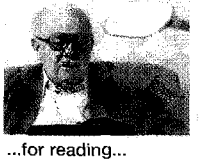

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The VERILUX® HappyEyes® Floor Lamp will change the way you see and feel about your living or work spaces. Studies show that sunshine can lift your mood and your energy levels, but as we all know the sun, unfortunately, does not always shine. So to bring the benefits of natural daylight indoors, VERILUX, The Healthy Lighting Company™, created the VERILUX HappyEyes Floor Lamp that simulates the balanced spectrum of daylight. You will see with more comfort and ease as this lamp provides sharp visibility for close tasks and reduces eyestrain. Its 27-watt compact fluorescent bulb is the equivalent to a 150-watt ordinary light bulb. This makes it perfect for activities such as reading, writing, sewing and needlepoint, and especially for aging eyes. For artists, the VERILUX HappyEyes Floor Lamp can bring a source of natural light into a studio, and show the true colors of a work. This lamp has a flexible gooseneck design for maximum efficiency and an "Instant On" switch that is flicker-free. The high fidelity electronics, ergonomically correct design, and bulb that lasts five times longer than an ordinary bulb make this product a must-see.

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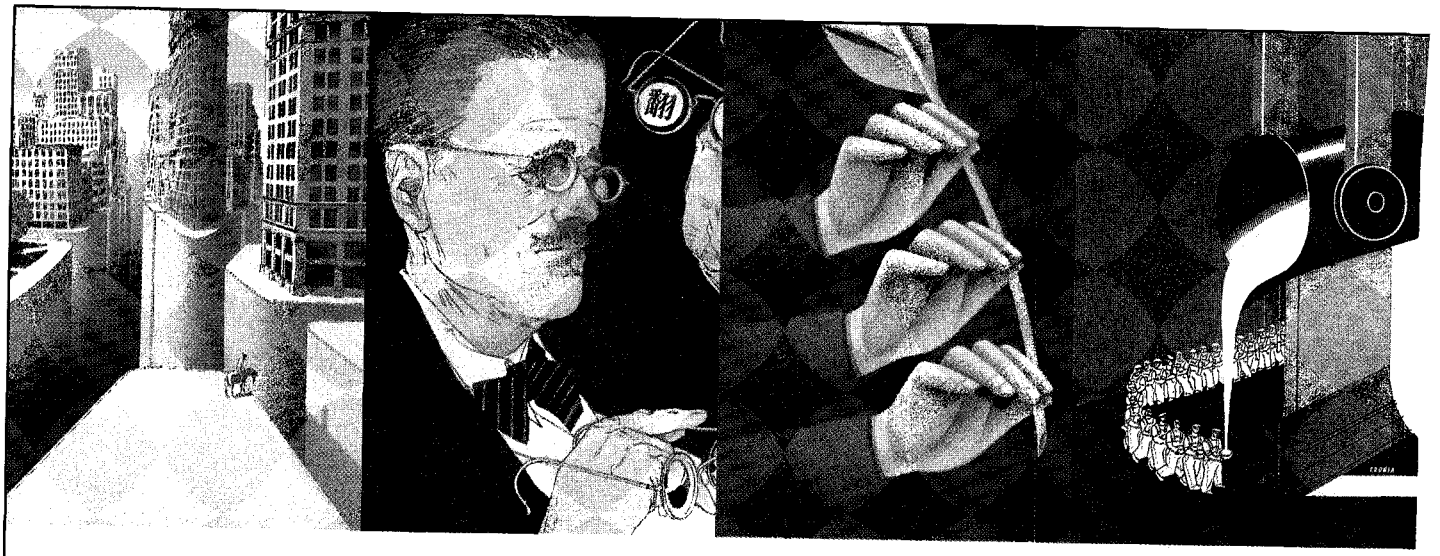

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PURSUITS & RETREATS

INNOCENT BYSTANDER

THE OLDEN MEAN

When the posthuman future meets our pre-posthuman selves

BY CULLEN MURPHY

.....

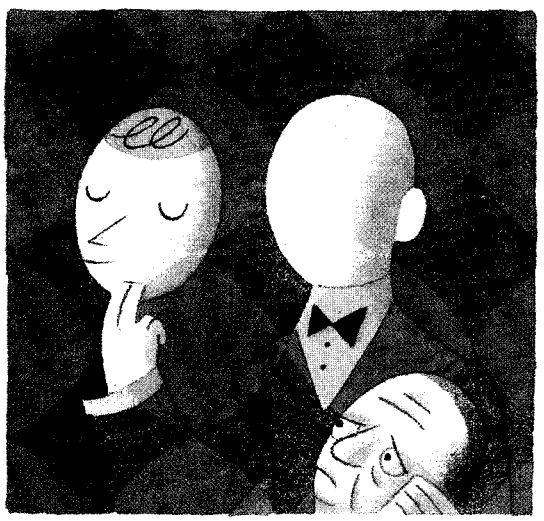
The newspaper headline heralded a breakthrough: "ANCIENT CHILD-RAISING TECHNIQUES ARE REBORN." The story, on a front page of a section of *The Boston Globe*, concerned a group of cutting-edge young mothers who are resolved to throw conventional wisdom to the winds and raise their infants in the most enlightened way possible. Just how revolutionary is this new approach, which is called "attachment parenting"? Among other things, it calls for breast-feeding your child. Wearing your infant in a sling. Being responsive to your baby's cries. Avoiding long separations.

Scoff as you may, these women might be on to something. Indeed, some of the suggested behaviors seem to have been taken up by billions of mothers worldwide, with hardly a conscious thought. The *Globe* invoked one mother from a maternally advanced suburb.

> [Ms. Brown] said she just naturally practiced attachment parenting without knowing her decisions had a name. "To find out there were other parents who did those kinds of things and it was called something, I thought it was great," she said.

It should come as no surprise that the instinctive responses of Suburban Mom and Cro-Magnon Mom fall into a roughly similar pattern. The human organism—the corporeal thing itself, its needs and wants, its likes and dislikes, its limitations, its shape—is the most conservative force in human society.

This fact is so obvious that it virtually recedes into oblivion. A few years ago archaeologists succeeded in dating a cache of ancient shoes found in a cave overlooking the Missouri River. The shoes went back to as early as 6,000 B.C., and came in a variety of styles—some looked like Mexican huaraches, some resembled a woman's sling-backs, some were sandals, some were slip-ons. Newspaper accounts of the discovery marveled that this ancient footwear, fashioned eight millennia before Gucci and Rockport, would not look out of place on modern feet. Why, you could wear it now! But of course you could—feet are feet. For similar reasons, a pharaoh's glove and The Gloved One's glove look surprisingly alike; a *condottiere*'s helmet and Darth Vader's helmet derive from the same functional principle. Rings and combs, trousers and condoms—they hold their shape over time. Leafing recently through a book about Roman Britain, I came across a photograph of an ancient bikini, unearthed during an excavation in central London. The triangular patch was exactly where you would expect; the anterior thong was aligned with the familiar gluteal groove.



GREG CLARKE

Over the ages and across countless cultures our beds have looked like beds, our chairs like chairs, our houses like houses. Our active lives are defined by the body's thresholds of heat and cold, pain and pleasure, energy and fatigue. Our eyesight is fixed within a specified range (better than that of bats, inferior to that of eagles), and so is our hearing. The sheer physical demands of hauling the body to work seem to be influenced by some inherent governor: a famous study of commuting, for instance, suggested that although distances have changed with technological advances, people in all eras and cultures have budgeted about the same amount of time for daily travel (on average, about half an hour one way).

The built-in conservatism of the body has its analogue in the brain. Certain images and proportions are naturally pleasing to human sight; one is the golden mean, known as phi, which shows up everywhere from nautilus spirals to classical architecture. Evolutionary psychology is replete with examples of behavior that appear to be hard-wired. The rudimentary fact that our ancestors were once hunted for food by other species may have left a mark in various ways. We clump together socially—a defensive mechanism. Experiments show that children learn about predators faster than they do about far more prevalent threats—an atavistic phenomenon that one anthropologist calls Jurassic Park syndrome. The notion of ourselves as potential objects of

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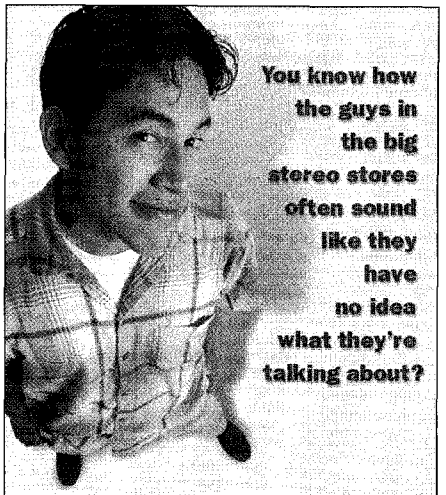

(Actually, it's a rhetorical question.)

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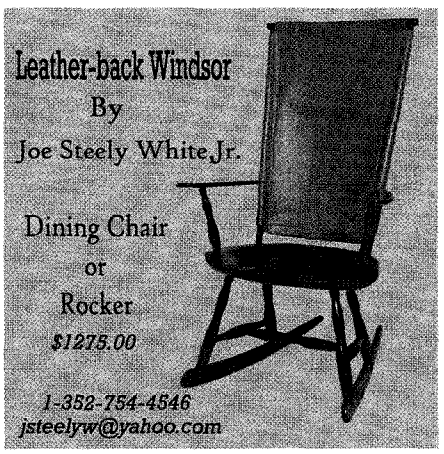

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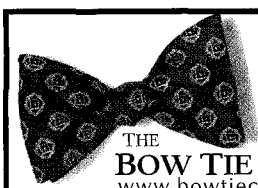

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predation surfaces from time to time even among the urbane. Recall Noël Coward's purported remark during the parade at Elizabeth II's coronation. As the massive Queen of Tonga came into view, someone pointed to the thin little man beside her and asked if that was her husband. Coward replied, "No, that's her lunch."

On balance, is the conservatism of the human body a force for good? It certainly serves as a kind of ballast—and as a brake. Entrepreneurs can extol the glories of having 500 cable channels, but luckily we still have only one set of eyes. The Internet has made the totality of human knowledge accessible to everyone, but the individual cerebral cortex presents the same bottleneck it always did. Everyone finds the limitations on human memory severe and annoying, but researchers remind us how useful the act of forgetting can be. Remembering too much, they note, is powerfully at odds with abstraction and creativity.

And yet we chafe under this regime, and continually press against it. Two new books take up the subject in various ways. One of them, *Our Own Devices*, by Edward Tenner, looks at how everyday technology, from shoelaces to eyeglasses to keyboards, affects the way we use our bodies. It concludes with a chapter on the coming age of augmented humanity, an age of "technological symbiosis," when a wide range of enabling devices will be not just portable but implantable. Tenner points out that if such things as pacemakers and cochlear implants are included, one American in ten has already received some sort of mechanized upgrade.

Many of these things, of course, are simply making up for the usual human deficiencies; they fall into the Precambrian era of our sensibility, compared with what's to come. The philosopher Carl Elliott's *Better Than Well* looks at a more recent stage: "enhancement technologies" as they apply to everything from aging to body height to motivation to happiness. Pharmaceuticals and the knife between them address a multitude of issues; genetic enhancement will address even more.

It is not clear that we will know when to stop. A newspaper report the other day brought word of the dawning age of face transplants. To be sure, the medical pioneers contend that the purpose is purely therapeutic—for burn victims and the like. But we all know that it's only a matter of time before satisfied recipients start emerging from Swiss clinics after the mystifying "disappearances" of people like Brad Pitt and Jennifer Lopez.

"There is an almost infinite number of possible technical ways to transform humanity," the novelist and apocalyptic visionary Bruce Sterling has observed.

> We can start from our firm kinship with the microscopic and work upward through every scale. Genetic ways. Mitochondrial ways. Tissue. Bone. Nerves. Guts. Through blood, lymph, and hormone. Through our senses, through our neurons. We are large, physical, multi-cellular entities; every aspect of our being offers up a scientific, technical, and industrial carnival.

The prospect of revolutionary change—the much anticipated "posthuman future"—is at once exciting and terrifying. And yet I retain considerable faith in the staying power of our preposthuman selves. Enhancement arrives with the audacity of Napoleon; the body responds with the inertial resistance of those two great Russian generals, January and February.

Besides, the most effective steps toward enhancement usually turn out to be the small ones. In that spirit, consider a study published this year by psychologists at the University of Texas at Austin. The findings, published in the journal *Psychological Science*, suggest that people who use a diverse array of pronouns have stronger immune systems, lower levels of stress, and less need to see the doctor than people who say "I" "I" "I" all the time. The study speculated that the willingness to perceive the world from many angles is a healthier outlook than solipsism. Can preposition therapy be far away? You, me, us, them: this is a form of enhancement we can all embrace.

Cullen Murphy is the managing editor of The Atlantic.

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JAMES NOEL SMITH

TRAVELS

CARBONARO AND PRIMAVERA

With gasoline prices in Cuba going up and up, it is once again an excellent time to have—and to be—an ox

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

.....

One thing will never change: Carbonaro must always be on the right. Five years from now, ten years, even twenty, if all goes well, Carbonaro will still be on the right and Primavera on the left, the two of them yoked together, pulling a spindly plough across the loamy fields in the hills outside Cienfuegos. Oxen are like that: absolutely rigid in their habits, intractable once they have learned their ways. Even when a working pair is out of harness and is being led to water or to a fresh spot to graze, the two animals must be aligned just as they are accustomed or they will bolt, or at the very least dig in and refuse to go any farther until order is restored, each ox in its place.

Carbonaro and Primavera were not always a pair. Twenty years ago Primavera was matched up and trained with an ox named Cimarrón. They worked side by side for two decades. But Cimarrón was a glutton, and he broke into the feed one day and ate himself sick, dying happy with incurable colic. It was an enormous loss. An ox costs thousands of pesos and must be babied along until the age of two and then requires at least a year of training before he can be put to work. It is especially difficult to lose half of a working pair: you have to find a new partner who fits the temperament and strength of your animal, and above all, you have to find an ox who can work on the now vacant side. Primavera would work only on the left. He could be matched only with a partner who was used to working on the right. It was a lucky thing to find Carbonaro, a right-sider and a pretty good match in terms of size, although to this day he is a little afraid of Primavera and hangs back just a bit.

Anyway, it was a lucky thing to find an ox at all. For a while oxen had seemed part of the Cuban landscape—huge, heavy-bodied creatures, with necks rising in a lump of muscle, their gigantic heads tapering into teacup-sized muzzles; homely animals with improbably slim legs and a light tread, their whip-thin tails flicking in a kind of staccato rhythm, the rest of their being unmoving, imperturbable, still. But then cheap Soviet oil came to Cuba, and chemical fertilizers, and, most important, tractors. In fact, during the 1960s and 1970s so many tractors were being sent to Cuba that there were more than the farmers could use. Sometimes when the Agriculture Ministry called the cooperatives to announce the arrival of more tractors, no one even bothered to go to the port to pick them up. During that time hardly anyone wanted oxen. With a heavy tractor a farmer could rip through a field at five or six times the speed he could with a team. It was, or it seemed, so much more modern, and so much simpler, than dealing with the complicated politics of a

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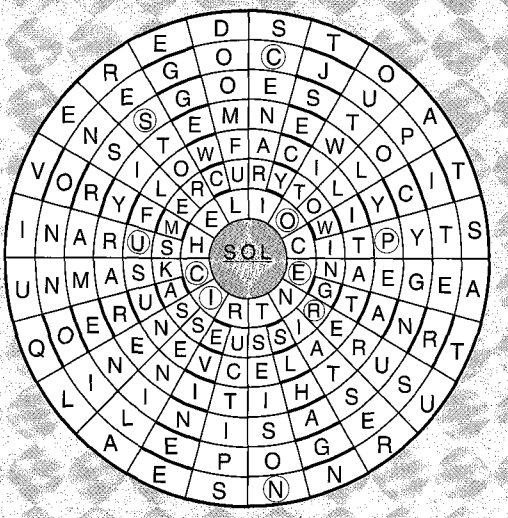
ANSWERS TO THE APRIL PUZZLER



"Circular Logic"

Circled letters spell COPERNICUS, *who postulated a* HELIOCENTRIC *system for the six planets known to him. Radial.* 1. SCENARIO (anag.) 2. (y)OU + TWIT 3. A + POLL + O 4. STY + P + TIC 5. A(E)GE + AN 6. U(SURE)R 7. RE(S)TAIN 8. NO SIEST(a) 9. SPIT CURL (anag.) 10. A-LINES (anag.) 11. L(IN)ENS 12. U(NMAS)K (*man's* anag.) 13. I + N A RUSH (*has run* anag.) 14. ENSILE (hidden) 15. REST + ORES 16. DOO(M)FUL (*of loud* anag.) *Rings.* a. SEAL (double def.); QUIVERED (double def.); ST(O)AT b. SECO (hidden); P + E + LION; NON(EC)O c. GOES TO (anag.); CY + GNUS; AS + I + NINE d. I + T(IN + ERA)RY; I + TEM (rev.); NEW + LY (*knew Lee* homophone) e. FLOW (rev.); F(ACI + LIT)ATE (*CIA* anag.); ALE + C f. I + SSUES (*Seuss* rev.); SAKS (homophone); TO + WING

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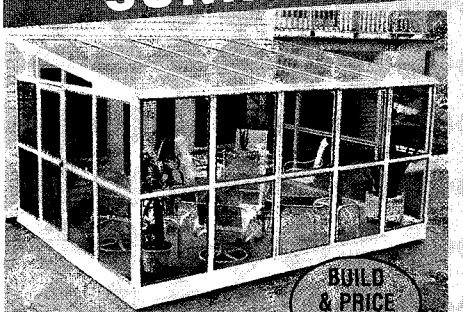

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flesh-and-blood team. Hardly anyone was raising or training oxen. With such a windfall of tractors, no one imagined that oxen would ever again be anything other than a quaint anachronism.

Even during the time of abounding tractors Humberto Quesada preferred using Primavera and Cimarrón—and then, of course, Carbonaro—but Humberto is an independent sort of man. His grandfather was brought to Cuba as a slave and was put to work on a sugar plantation of 70,000 rich acres owned by a Massachusetts family. Humberto's father was a slave there too, and Humberto as a child worked beside him in the fields, so that he could learn how to do what he assumed he'd grow up to do. Although the Quesadas were slaves, they were mavericks. Humberto's sister Ramona, a tiny woman with tight curls and a dry laugh, married the son of white farmers down the road—a scandal at the time, but one that yielded a happy fifty-year marriage that became the warm center of the joined families. And of course Humberto went his own way. After the Castro revolution he became a truck driver, but he kept a hand in farming. It was different, because he was farming his own land, a piece of the old plantation. "The land is the foundation of everything," he told me not long ago. "If you have land, you always have something." He was encouraged to join a cooperative, but like many Cuban farmers, he chose to work alone. "There's always a lazy person in a group, so I don't like being part of groups," he explained. Moreover, he resisted each time the government tried to cut back a little bit of his land. Recently the government wanted to build a health clinic on a piece of his property, but once the official in charge of the appropriation realized that the magnificent sweet potatoes he regularly enjoyed were from Humberto's farm, he changed his mind and said Humberto should have *more* land, not less.

Once or twice Humberto rented a tractor, but he didn't like it. "It presses too hard," he explained. "The land ends up flattened, like a Cuban sandwich." Even when everyone else was using tractors, using chemicals, growing only sugar, Humberto ploughed with oxen;

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fertilized naturally, the way his father had taught him; cultivated tomatoes and corn and lettuce and beans—and sweet potatoes. Humberto never actually owned the oxen. He borrowed them from his neighbor, whose father had fought beside Humberto's father in the War of Independence.

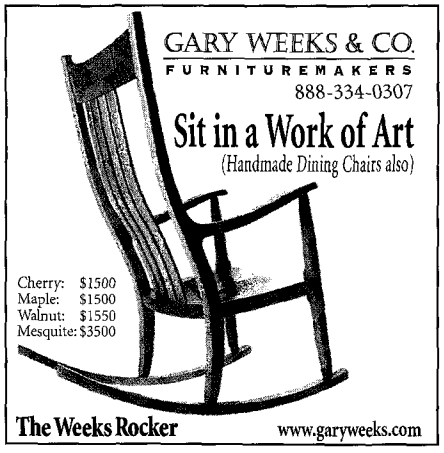
When the Soviet money ran out, the battalions of tractors, now out of gas, rattled to a standstill, and oxen—quaint, anachronistic oxen—were once again worth their weight in gold. It was a lucky farmer who had never given them up, who still had a working team, who could still plough and plant even in the worst moments after the Soviet collapse. Luckier still was a farmer who had stuck with such crops as corn and tomatoes rather than being seduced by the money that had seemed as if it would flow forever from sugar. In such a moment a man like Humberto no longer seemed a throwback. Now in his eighties, slightly lame, wizened, Humberto is everything the new Cuban farmer needs to be: small-scale, efficient, diversified, organic—and, most important, invulnerable to the ups and downs of Cuba's gasoline economy, which once depended entirely on Soviet good will and has since come to rest precariously on Venezuelan. Most of the imported oil in Cuba these days comes from Venezuela, and because of the good relationship between Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, Venezuela's President, the price had, until recently, been especially favorable. But Chávez was nearly overthrown in April of last year, and when he regained his footing, he suspended the shipments. Across Cuba gasoline prices rose by as much as 20 percent. It was a very good time to have an ox.

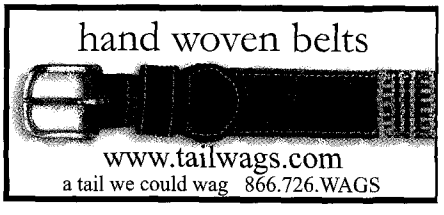
One recent morning Humberto stopped by to say hello to his sister, who lives with her extended family on another piece of the old plantation property. It was a brilliant, breezy day. Outside Ramona's little cottage a couple of chickens were worrying the dirt, and a litter of piglets were chasing around in a pile of hay. The cottage is tidy, old, and unadorned; there is something timeless about it, as if nothing here, or nearby, had changed in twenty or thirty or fifty years. And, of course, nothing much *has* changed in the countryside: the elemental facts, the worries over sun and water and whether the seeds have germinated and the eggs have hatched, don't ever change. In Cuba right now there is a sense of the moment, a sense that the country is on the brink of newness and change, a sense that the future is unfurling right now—but the countryside has a constancy, a permanence. And these days Humberto feels like a rich man. He said that everyone he knows is going crazy looking for oxen, and that you have to barter for them or apply to the government, and that anyone who still knows how to train a team—a skill that was of course considered obsolete when the tractors prevailed—is being offered a premium for his talents. He grinned as he said this, pantomiming the frantic gestures of a desperate man looking high and low for a trained ploughing team.

Someday, no doubt, the tractors will start up again, and the hills beyond Cienfuegos and the fields outside Havana and the meadows in Camagüey and Trinidad and Santiago de Cuba will be ploughed faster than the fastest team could dream of. Then, once again, oxen won't be golden anymore. They will be relics, curiosities. But this is their moment, just as it is Humberto's moment, when being slow and shrewd and tough is paying off.

After we'd talked awhile, Humberto got up and headed down the drive and over to his neighbor's, and a few minutes later he reappeared, leading the two oxen, who were walking side by side. He stopped in the yard near the cottage and brought the animals to a halt and stood beside them, one hand laid lightly on Primavera's neck. The oxen shuffled their feet a little and looked sidelong at the cottage, the chickens, a curtain ruffling in the breeze in Ramona's entryway. Humberto's straw hat was tipped back, and it cast a lacy shadow across his face; he leaned a little against the animal's warm gray shoulder and he smiled.

Susan Orlean, a staff writer for The New Yorker, *wrote* The Orchid Thief *(1999)—the basis for the movie* Adaptation. *This article is drawn from* Cuba on the Verge: An Island in Transition, *edited by Terry McCoy, to be published this month by Bulfinch Press.*





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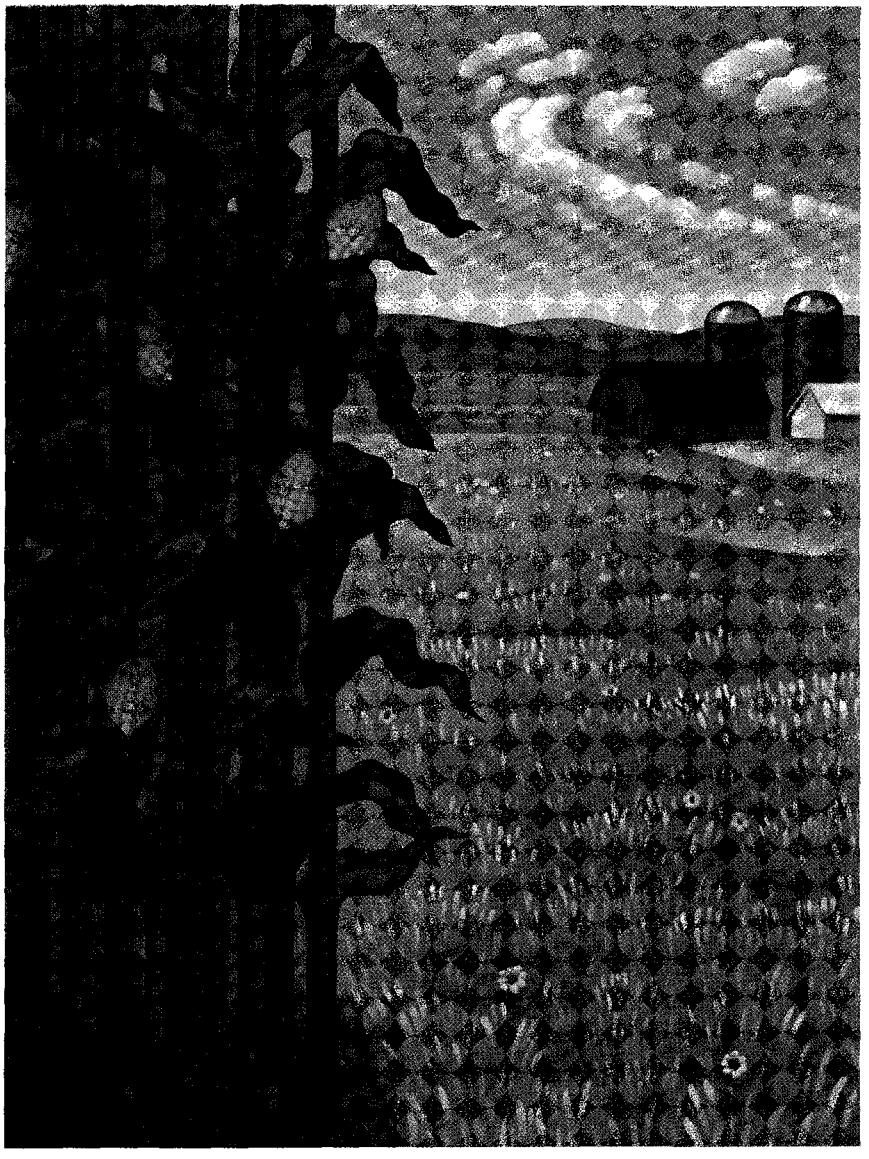

FOOD

BACK TO GRASS

The old way of raising cattle is now the new way—better for the animals and better for your table

BY CORBY KUMMER

.....

Beef has come to seem a hazardous substance. If years of warnings about the dangers of saturated fat and heart disease weren't enough, Eric Schlosser's book *Fast Food Nation* (2001)—with its graphic and disturbing picture of the inhumane working conditions of meatpackers and the contamination from criminally rushed slaughtering and processing—made clear that it is unwise if not foolhardy to eat beef ground by anyone but yourself. Then an article last year by Michael Pollan, in *The New York Times Magazine*, told us that corn-fed beef, the presumed gold standard for tender, luxurious steak, is far from wholesome. It isn't very good for the people who eat the fat-streaked meat that corn produces, and eating corn is terrible for cattle, which are ruminants meant to chew grass. Corn leaves their digestive tracts susceptible to *E. coli* and other pathogenic bacteria. Almost all cattle raised for beef are force-fed corn (which costs less to buy than it does to grow, thanks to federal farm subsidies), and the resulting stress makes it necessary to keep them on high doses of antibiotics. "Finishing" for corn-fed beef takes place on vast feedlots, where cattle raised in many parts of the West are trucked to a miserable end. This force-feeding provokes moral hesitations like those raised by that notorious product of force-feeding, foie gras. At least geese are designed to eat corn.

Whatever the current troubles of McDonald's and other burger purveyors, beef remains America's most popular meat. Many meat lovers, alarmed by Schlosser's book and Pollan's article, have decided to go organic—a choice always to be applauded, for the benefits that chemical-free farming brings to the environment and the health of farm workers, and a choice made easier by the adoption last October of a national organic standard. But organic, vexingly, will not necessarily satisfy people who care about flavor and freshness. Once the food industry saw there was a profit to be made, "organic" stopped being a guarantee of attention to flavor or individual care. In the case of beef, "organic" can mean "raised in confinement and given organic corn." And a last-minute legislative provision passed in February, allowing farmers to give livestock non-organic feed and still certify their meat as "organic," threatens to rob the term of all credibility.

There is an alternative: grass-fed beef. Ideally this refers to animals raised in open pastures and fed grass and silage all their lives after weaning. Grass feeding results in far lower levels of saturated fat and high levels of both omega-3 fatty acids (more commonly found in fish, and thought to help prevent heart disease) and the newest darling of the nutritional world—CLA (conjugated linoleic acid), polyunsaturated fat that may help prevent cancer. These benefits, and also higher levels of antioxidants, appear in all food from all animals that eat grass, milk and cheese as well as meat.

As with "organic," though, the lure of a new market willing to pay a premium has led to fudged definitions. Some meat producers use "grass-fed" to describe animals that are raised in pens on industrial feed, including corn, and finished on rations of grass in feedlots

ROBERT GOLDSTROM

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far from home. A similar confusion still surrounds "free-range," which can refer to animals that roam where they please or to animals kept in barns and allowed to range in circumscribed yards. No one regulates the use of these terms, and given how many years it took to achieve a national definition of "organic," it may be a long time before anyone does. Determined beef lovers in search of true grass-fed beef have encountered uneven availability and, occasionally, the necessity of buying an entire side of beef at a time (which requires both a very large freezer and the skill to cook lesser cuts). Economic inefficiency and shipping costs lead to higher prices—the usual tariff for more healthful, less industrial food.

The search is worth it. Grass-fed beef tastes better than corn-fed beef: meatier, purer, far less fatty, the way we imagine beef tasted before feedlots and farm subsidies changed ranchers and cattle. I recently visited two ranchers and the founder of a cooperative, all of whom have taken the purist approach to grass-fed beef. Each has managed to meet three big challenges facing ranchers who want to avoid sending their animals to a feedlot: finding slaughterhouses that will accept and process just a few animals at a time and treat them humanely; supplying meat year-round, although grass is seasonal; and selling both prime and secondary cuts. Each offers an easy way to order true grass-fed beef, a step that should lead to a conversion experience. To ensure satisfaction I offer a foolproof recipe for brisket—my mother's.

Any reservations I have about the ethics of eating meat recede when I visit a farm or ranch run by someone who cares deeply about animals and how they live. Culling and, yes, killing a portion of a herd seems a natural way of helping a group of animals and their habitat to thrive. This paradox struck me when I rode last summer in the old tan Suburban of Dale Lasater, a rancher in Matheson, Colorado, an hour or so southeast of Denver. Lasater, a gentle, witty, contemplative man, appears briefly in *Fast Food Nation* as a corrective model for the beef industry. His

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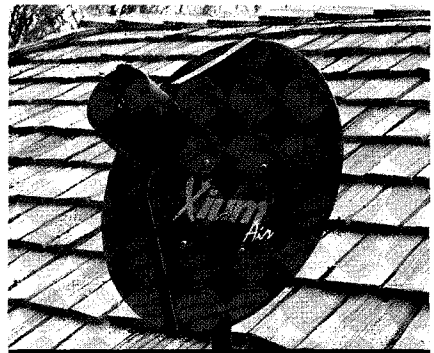

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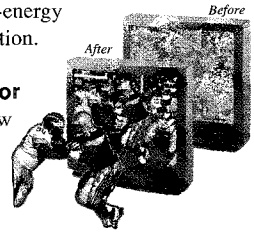

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father, Tom, himself a third-generation rancher, moved from Texas to Colorado in search of affordable land, and in the 1950s took the heretical step of making his ranch a wildlife sanctuary, refusing to kill predators and pests or, later, to use fertilizers and herbicides. This, he hoped, would allow him to restore nutritive grasses and water reserves to the parched, depleted land he had bought, and to protect the ranch from developers in Denver and Colorado Springs. The Lasaters were influenced by the ideas of Allan Savory, a guru of grasslands management, who advocated a careful rotation of pastures to allow the natural regrowth of grasses.

Tom Lasater's unconventional methods worked. Even if his fellow ranchers couldn't bring themselves to copy them, let alone to install the miles of electric fence necessary to keep animals in a land-preserving rotation, they respected the health of his livestock, which they bought for breeding.

Since *Fast Food Nation* was published, Dale Lasater has built his mail-order meat business, now in its sixth year, to the point where he can sell most of his animals directly, either for breeding or as meat. The idea of selling meat, something his family had never done (though they had sold dairy products), was inspired by his memories of working on a cattle ranch in Argentina while on a Fulbright scholarship, when twice a day he ate what he remembers as the best beef he ever tasted. Argentine beef, still thought by many to be the world's best, is all grass-fed in the high Pampas. Now that the ranch was raising grass-fed cattle, he reasoned, their meat should be just as good to eat. Lasater and his partner, Duke Phillips, a former manager of the ranch, had to find careful slaughterhouses, and also refrigerators where they could dry-age meat for fourteen to twenty-one days. Dry-aging, a step that was long a luxury reserved to the wholesalers and customers who could pay the added costs of storage and surveillance, enhances flavor and is a necessity to tenderize grass-fed beef.

After we toured the miles of his ranch, where heifers and young bulls surrounded the Suburban as if magnet-

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ically drawn, Lasater gave me cooked samples of several cuts of meat, including the first ground beef I'd had in a long time. It was so lean that it tasted like some other kind of meat, perhaps game (wild animals are naturally lean and of course grass-fed, too, if they are herbivores). But I quickly became accustomed to the more intense flavors, and began to appreciate what I had been missing. I found that the brisket—a secondary cut that has more fat and lots of collagen fibers, which turn gelatinous and tender when cooked—had the deepest and most rounded flavor of everything we tasted. Lasater wasn't surprised: it's his favorite cut too.

Tom Gamble has much in common with Dale Lasater. His grandfather went into cattle ranching in the early 1900s, near Napa, California, and one of his father's goals in continuing the business was to preserve the land from encroaching urban development. When I met Gamble at his house in Napa last fall, he described stumbling through many of the difficulties that Lasater and Phillips faced five years ago: where to process the meat, how long to dry-age, which cuts to offer, how to distribute. A slaughterhouse that would treat the animals with the care Gamble wanted proved very hard to find; when we spoke, Gamble was preparing to spend the next day trucking several steers to one in Chico—nearly three hours away.

His partner in the meat business is Bill Davies, the scion of a highly regarded winemaking family. Gamble compared the nascent grass-fed-beef business to the Napa wine industry in the 1960s. "There's no infrastructure for the little guys," he said. He is optimistic that the market will flourish once consumers understand how grass feeding contributes to the environment and to flavor, and he looks forward to changes that will help small ranchers. Mobile bottling lines have saved small wineries from having to buy and maintain expensive, hard-to-clean, space-hogging machinery; Gamble dreams of mobile slaughtering facilities that will go from ranch to ranch. He himself went door to door to the area's nationally known restaurants, which were more accustomed to calls from neophyte winemakers. He was proud to have created an enthusiastic local market for secondary cuts such as skirt steak, sirloin tips, and even fajita strips. ("Go next door," he said of one local restaurant, "and have an enchilada with beef in it—it's an incredible thing.") Speaking in a vocabulary familiar to his winemaking peers, Gamble described the shift from corn-fed to grass-fed beef as being "like going from insipid hearty burgundy to a Cab that maybe needs more age but has more complexity."

Ridge Shinn, the founder of the New England Livestock Alliance, in central Massachusetts, has big ambitions: to show New England dairy farmers who join his cooperative that by switching from milk to meat they can survive in a steadily more difficult economy. He scoffs at the idea that freezing winters like this past one are an obstacle: "Deer don't live in barns," he says, "and cattle have much thicker layers of fat." While working as a farmer at Old Sturbridge Village, in central Massachusetts, Shinn learned nineteenth-century agricultural practices and became a believer in the superiority of New England grass to any other grass in the country—a superiority, he told me recently, that ranchers visiting from elsewhere enviously confirm. As for the short grazing season, Shinn advocates "long-cut silage," meaning hay baled as soon as the grass is cut rather than after it has been allowed to dry.

Shinn found a slaughterhouse that was willing to follow techniques recommended by Temple Grandin, the autistic woman who has pioneered humane treatment in the country's livestock-handling industry. The slaughterhouse, in Stafford Springs, Connecticut, is just two and a half hours from New York City, the country's largest market for top-quality meat. About a dozen farmers have agreed to follow Shinn's rules, which include feeding calves on mother's milk for at least two months and then on just grass or hay, and adopting certain other humane raising methods. To ensure the quality of the meat on which he is betting the cooperative's reputation, Shinn goes from farm to farm with an ultrasound machine that evaluates the fat and muscle structure of

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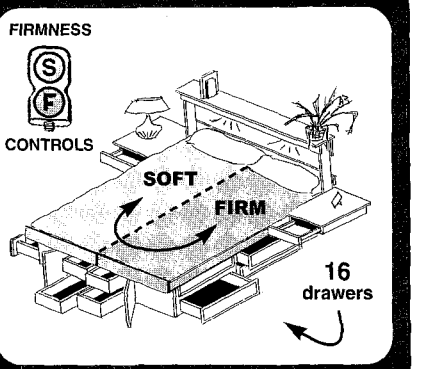

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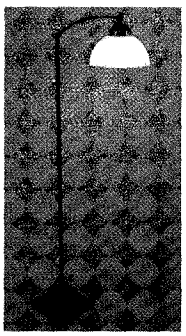
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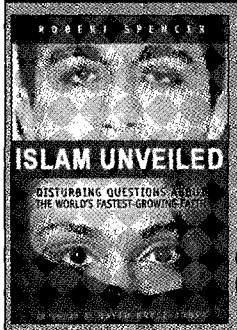

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each animal at slaughter weight. Big industry, he points out, grades meat after slaughter; but the cooperative's machine enables farmers to choose in advance only those animals that will meet the standards of the cooperative's Pasture Perfect brand.

Like Lasater and Gamble, Shinn believes that in the long run the only way to guarantee quality is through careful breeding; his chief concentration is on finding breeds best suited to the New England climate. So far he is a successful competitor in the luxury market on grounds of flavor: in a recent tasting of filets mignons, *Wine Spectator* rated Pasture Perfect's best.

Before ordering and cooking grass-fed beef, you have to decide you're ready for the real taste of beef—a taste that corn-fattening has for decades blanketed with an unpleasantly sweet, bland, rich coating. Losing the flavor of corn in beef is like scraping away a gooey glaze. The usual complaint is that grass-fed beef is stringy rather than tender. This can be addressed by careful cooking, and by buying cuts naturally higher in fat. It can be erased by my mother's famous brisket.

Every family has its treasured pot roast, of course, and mine has special significance. At the beginning of their marriages my mother shared the recipe for it with her best friend from high school, who had moved to northern California from the Connecticut town where they grew up, and who liked it so much that it became her company dish. After my mother died, my family had the luck of continuing to enjoy it as prepared by her friend, who became my stepmother.

Homey recipes like this have periodic revivals, especially in insecure times, and they are at the heart of two appealing new books: *The Way We Cook*, by Sheryl Julian and Julie Riven, full of wonderful, simple recipes based on their northeastern upbringing and wide cooking experience, and Marian Burros's *Cooking for Comfort*, with reliable, barely reconstructed recipes from the 1950s and 1960s and her own Connecticut Jewish childhood (shockingly, Burros adds ketchup, brown sugar, and tomato puree to her mother's spare original brisket).

For my family's recipe, season both sides of a medium brisket—Lasater's are just the right size, three to five pounds, and well trimmed—with salt, pepper, paprika, and, if you truly want to revisit the sixties, Ac'cent. Heat the oven to 350°. In an uncovered heavy Dutch oven sear the meat fat side down over medium-high heat in a film of hot olive oil. Turn it when it is quite brown and remove as much fat as possible. Strew over the meat one or two medium onions, chopped; two or three medium carrots, peeled and sliced; one large tomato, skinned, seeded, and chopped; a bell pepper, peeled, ribbed, and sliced (green for period authenticity, though I prefer red); and a medium clove of garlic, peeled and minced. Add two cups of water or stock (my stepmother makes fresh, unsalted chicken stock for this dish), cover, and cook in the oven for three and a half hours. After two hours add peeled and halved potatoes if you wish, being careful not to crowd the pot lest they steam rather than roast. An hour later add one cup of sliced button mushrooms (my mother used canned sliced mushrooms, drained—a practice my stepmother follows despite her Californian emphasis on freshness), a quarter to a half cup of red wine, and half a teaspoon of Gravy Master. You can omit the Ac'cent, of course, now that we know about MSG headache, and water is fine in place of stock. But you should really add the Gravy Master. When the pot liquor is skimmed, it makes an incomparable gravy for a dish that will ever withstand the test of time.

Lasater brisket and other cuts can be ordered at www.lasatergrasslandsbeef.com or by phone, 866-454-2333. The site for Tom Gamble and Bill Davies's fajita strips and fancier cuts is www.napafreerangebeef.com, and the number is 707-963-6134. Information for ordering Pasture Perfect steaks and other cuts, and also on grasslands farming as practiced by members of the New England Livestock Alliance, is at www.nelastore.com, and the number is 413-528-3767.

Corby Kummer is a senior editor of The Atlantic. *His most recent book is* The Pleasures of Slow Food *(2002).*

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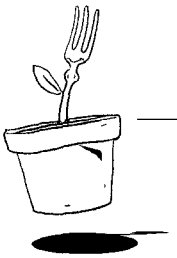


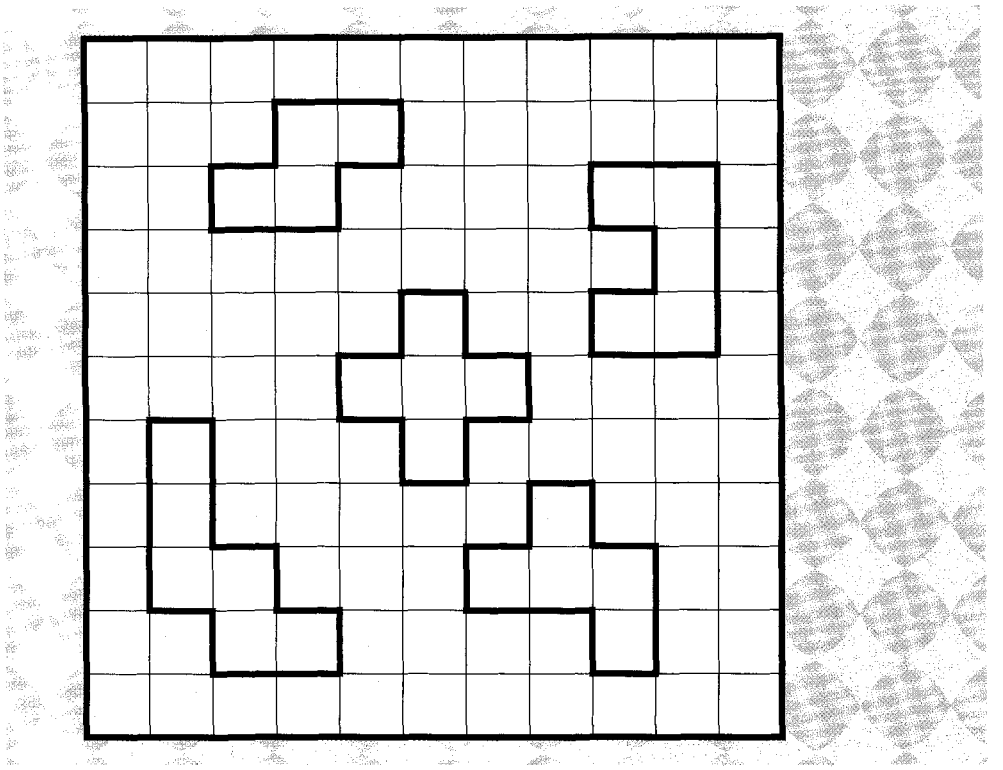
THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX *and* HENRY RATHVON

Treasure Island

The diagram represents five islands in a sea of words. Acrosses begin in the top left square and proceed sequentially left to right; any word unfinished at the right continues from the left in the next row. Downs similarly begin in the top left square and proceed sequentially top to bottom; any word unfinished at the bottom continues from the top in the next column. Some of the islands are crossed by Across words only, and some are crossed by Down words only. The words in four of the islands can be arranged to spell a cryptic clue for the fifth island's word. This fifth island, it will be discovered, is not fully crossed and must be completed by solving the extra clue. The letters added for this final word spell something handy for reaching an island, and the whole word will make a treasure. Clues are numbered for convenience only, and their answers include seven capitalized words.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 136.



ACROSS

1. Worn wood from sailing boats (5)
2. Full snake swallowed last of brood (5)
3. Fling hype in bishop's domain (5)
4. Debut of play, a corny item? (4)
5. Primate's front toe in bent position for dancing (6)
6. Sings right, surrounded by critters of the wood (6)
7. Actress named Katey back as Lassie (5)
8. Doctors catching first of tuna fish (9)
9. Raises birds, including cardinal (9)
10. Cuckoo lay, in playful kind of thinking (8)
11. Hawk or sell individually about 500 (7)
12. Live in brand-new part of a mosque (7)
13. African whose role is to sing and pluck about love (5)
14. Home of some Italians drifting in sea (5)
15. Sound made by angry fly (4)
16. New moon: tide lowering (8)
17. Take care of cryptic runes (5)
18. Carried chairs without acquiring education (6)

DOWN

1. Aquatic animal moving on pegs (6)
2. Giant sun engulfs the thing (5)
3. A siren wound up (6)
4. Old master of rye-bread sandwiches speaking (6)
5. Figure awarded for operating system transport (5)
6. Algerian hub importing grand set of pipes (5)
7. Oral report of a seizing getting your attention (9)
8. Discovered 7 minus 5 (4)
9. Iberian plateau featured in Siamese tale (6)
10. Pueblo town's Southwestern food lacking heart (4)
11. Little monkey with tail of orange covered with a coat of fur (6)
12. Swinger's way of moving on foot discussed (4)
13. Alarm for poison sounded (6)
14. Goof I'd entered in stress (8)
15. Big bird in a hand, dummy (7)
16. Guy famous for writing novels in addition is performing live (7)
17. Dashing secret agent gulps scrap (6)
18. Thinks dreamily of low poles (5)

Note: *The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/puzzclue.htm or send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.*

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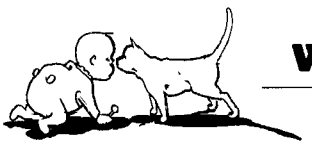

Word Fugitives

by Barbara Wallraff

If the suggested answers to one of December's Word Fugitives requests included *audiots*, *cellfish*, *cellots*, *cellulouts*, *earheads*, *earitants*, *incellferables*, *imbecells*, *jabberwonks*, and *phonies*, what was the question?

Why, it was what to call people "who seem to have a cell phone glued to one of their ears." In the past Word Fugitives has reckoned with people whose habits are truly unsavory—for instance, changing song lyrics to make them obscene, or screaming at other drivers when behind the wheel of a car—and in every case at least a few respondents have risen to the defense of the people in question. Not this time.

Russ Newsom, of Charlotte, North Carolina, suggested the word *phoneglommer* but, rather than explaining that, recounted this tale: "I was involved in a car accident, and one man, the cause, was cut on his forehead. I approached his car and, trying to remember my Red Cross training, said simply, 'Are you okay?' He was in his front seat, bleeding profusely. He continued talking on his phone and held out one forefinger to me—the 'Hold on one second' gesture."

Jim Castrone, of Westminster, Colorado, told this story: "Recently my daughter persuaded an entire commuter bus full of people to pose, cell phones to their ears, for an impromptu group picture as part of a project for her college photography class. The result was an extraordinary photo of people doing something that has become so commonplace it almost parodied itself. The reality was that only a small handful of people actually heard and responded to her spur-of-the-moment request. The rest were already on their phones and pre-posed."

And that hints at what was so strange about the overall response to this question: we've met the enemy and it is us. Brian Flanagan, of Boston, came about as close as anyone to expressing solidarity with cell-phone users: "An appropriate word to describe these people, whose chatter we resent and yet whose ranks we are all too ready to join when our own cell phones ring, might be *cell mates*, conveying that we're all pretty efficiently imprisoned in this cellular world."

But, of course, we do resent others' loud, public chatter, and the word requested was meant to reflect that. Taking top honors here is Tim Weiner, of Mexico City, for his coinage *yakasses*.

Readers were evidently less inspired by the other December Word Fugitives request, for a word comparable to *gesundheit* to say to people who have just coughed. Olivia B. Snyder, of Philadelphia, wrote, "My grandmother always said (still does) *ooga booga*. Neither my mother nor I know why." Leo Schulte, of Toledo, Ohio, suggested, "Since Saint Blaise is the patron saint of throat ailments, how about *Blaise you!*" Nancy Ashmore, of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, wrote, "I work with children, and here is what I say to coughers all the time: *Please cover your mouth.*"

James Hilton, of Englewood, Colorado, gave it his best shot. He wrote, "After someone coughs, you could say *geslungenaus*, meaning, 'Please stop—if you keep doing that, you're going to cough up your lungs.' You could say *gesbaggenheit*, meaning, 'Here, put this bag over your head if you plan to keep doing that.' You could say *gessockenstuffen*, meaning, 'Keep that up and I'm going to have to gag you.' You could say *geskoffenmitschooten*, meaning, 'I'm sorry, but if you keep doing that, I'll have to put you out of your misery.' You could say *gesfatigenwheezin*, meaning ..."

Well, I have to award top honors to someone, so they go to Suzanne Ellison, of Annapolis, Maryland. She wrote, "My Neapolitan grandfather had a 'blessing' to offer a cougher, and it has a nice touch of fatalism: *'Sper'e c'o purmone soje fatiche e ch'essa nun more.'* It translates, roughly, 'I hope you have some lung left and don't die.'"

Now Jeff M. Sellers, of Glen Ellyn, Illinois, writes, "Being able to name my problem may be half the battle. Is there a word for a fear of running over squirrels?"

And Paul von Hippel, of Columbus, Ohio, writes, "Is there a word for the common experience of saying something to your child and then realizing—often with a shock—that you sound like one of your own parents?"

Send words that meet Jeff Sellers's or Paul von Hippel's needs to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic Monthly, *77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by May 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you'd like* The Atlantic*'s help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.*

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic *authors. The next installment's correspondents will be sent* The Pleasures of Slow Food, *by Corby Kummer, and* Reefer Madness: Sex, Drugs, and Cheap Labor in the American Black Market, *by Eric Schlosser.*

GREG CLARKE

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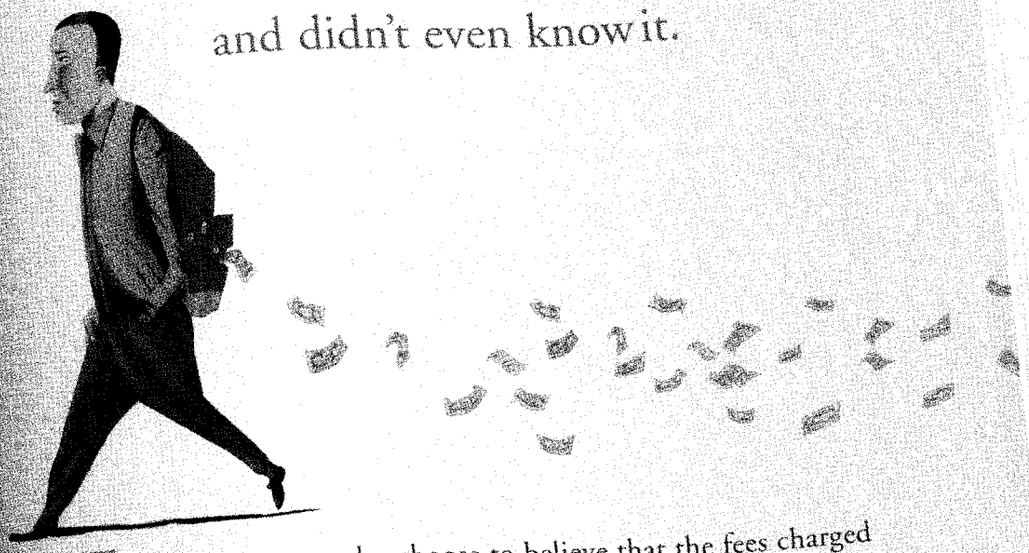

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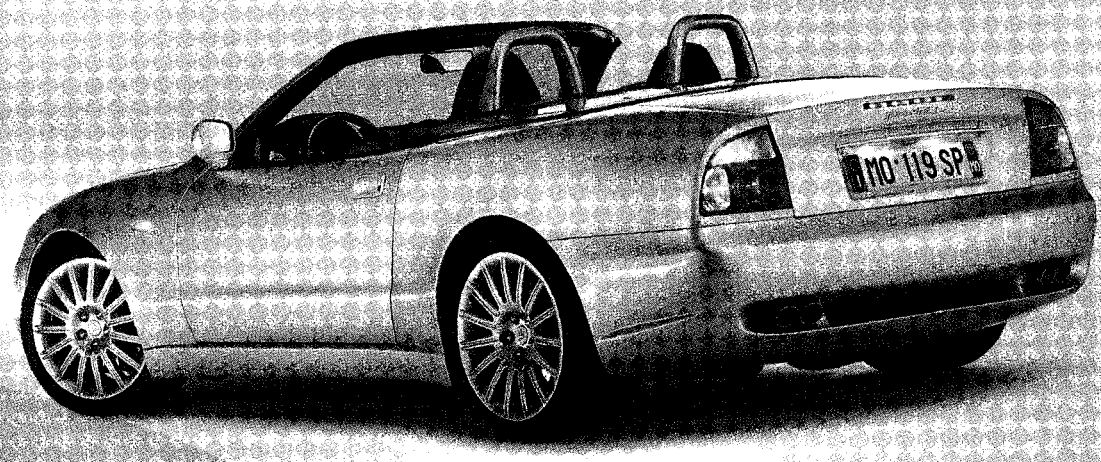

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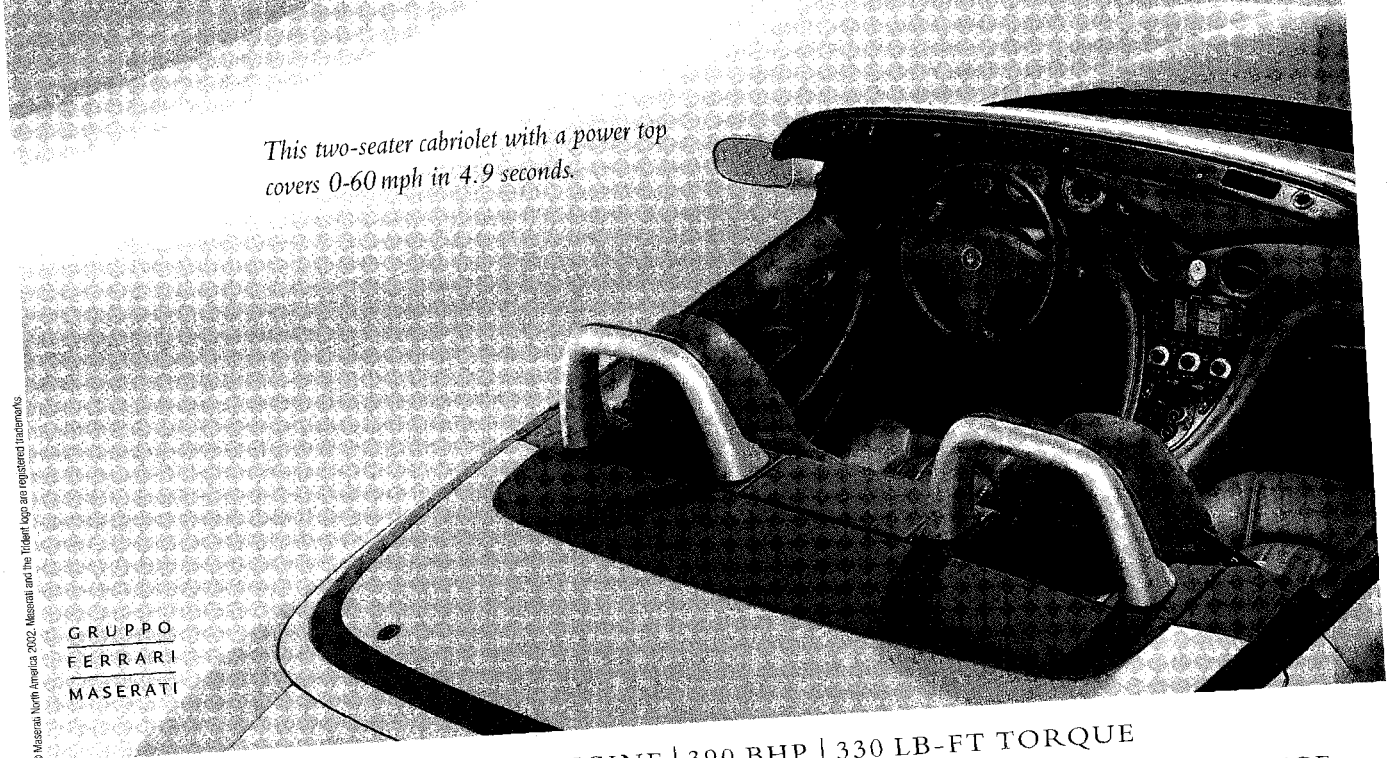

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